THE WORKS OF OSSIAN, THE SON of FINGAL.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

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Translated from the GALIC LANGUAGE

By JAMES MACPHERSON.

VOL. IV.

Fortia facta patrum. VIRG.

PARIS:
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M. DCC. LXXXIII.

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MUSEUM BRITANNICUM

CATHLIN
OF
CLUTHA:
A
POEM.

ARGUMENT.

An addreſs to Malvina, the daughter of Toſcar. — The poet relates the arrival of Cathlin in Selma, to ſolicit aid againſt Duth-carmor of Cluba, who had killed Cathmol, for the ſake of his daughter Lanul. — Fingal declining to make a choice among his heroes, who were all claiming the command of the expedition; they retired each to his hill of ghoſts; *to be determined by dreams. The ſpirit of Trenmor appears to Oſſian and Oſcar: they ſail, from the bay of Carmona, and, on the fourth day, appear off the valley of Rathcol, in Inis-huna, where Duth-carmor had fixed his reſidence. — Oſſian diſpatches a bard to Duth-carmor to demand battle. — Night comes on. — The diſtreſs of Cathlin of Clutha. — Oſſian devolves the command on Oſcar, who, according to the cuſtom of the kings of Morven, before battle, retired to a neighbouring hill. — Upon the coming on of day, the battle joins. — Oſcar and Duth-carmor meet. The latter falls. — Oſcar carries the mail and helmet of Duth-carmor to Cathlin, who had retired from the field. Cathlin is diſcovered to be the daughter of Cathmol, in diſguiſe, who had been carried off, by force, by, and had made her eſcape from, Duth-carmor.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

CATHLIN OF CLUTHA: A POEM.

(1) COME, thou beam that art lonely, from watching in the night! The ſqually winds are around thee, from all their echoing hills. Red, over my hundred ſtreams, are the

(1) The traditions, which accompany this poem, inform us, that both it, and the ſucceeding piece, went, of old, under the name of *Laoi-Oi-lutha*; i. e. the *hymns of the maid of Lutha*. They pretend alſo to fix the time of its compoſition to the third year after the death of Fingal; that is, during the expedition of Fergus the ſon of Fingal, to the banks of *Uiſca duthon*. In ſupport of this opinion, the Highland ſenachies have prefixed to this poem, an addreſs of Oſſian, to Congal the young ſon of Fergus, which I have rejected, as having no manner of connection with the reſt of the piece. —— It has poetical merit; and, probably, it was the opening of one of Oſſian's other poems, tho' the bards injudiciouſly transferred it to the piece now before us.

« Congal ſon of Fergus of Durath, thou light

light-covered paths of the dead. They rejoice, on the eddying winds, in the ſtill ſeaſon of night. — Dwells there no joy in ſong, white hand of the harps of Lutha? Awake the voice of the ſtring, and roll my ſoul to me. It is a ſtream that has failed. — Malvina pour the ſong.

I hear thee, from thy darkneſs, in Selma, thou that watcheſt, lonely, by night! Why didſt thou with-hold the ſong, from Oſſian's failing ſoul? — As the falling brook to the ear of the hunter, deſcending from his ſtorm-covered hill; in a ſun-beam rolls the echoing ſtream; he hears, and ſhakes his dewy locks: ſuch is the voice of Lutha, to the friend of the ſpirits of heroes. — My ſwelling boſom beats high. I look back on the days that are paſt. — Come, thou beam that art lonely, from the watching of night.

In the echoing bay of Carmona (1) we ſaw,

between thy locks, aſcend to the rock of Selma, to the oak of the breaker of ſhields. Look over the boſom of night, it is ſtreaked with the red paths of the dead: look on the night of ghoſts, and kindle, O Congal, thy ſoul. Be not, like the moon on a ſtream, lonely in the midſt of clouds: darkneſs cloſes around it; and the beam departs. — Depart not, ſon of Fergus, ere thou markeſt the field with thy ſword. Aſcend to the rock of Selma; to the oak of the breaker of ſhields. »

(1) Car-mona, *bay of the dark brown hills*, an

one day, the bounding ship. On high, hung a broken shield; it was marked with wandering blood. Forward came a youth, in armour, and ſtretched his pointleſs ſpear. Long, over his tearful eyes, hung looſe his diſordered locks. Fingal gave the ſhell of kings. The words of the ſtranger aroſe.

arm of the ſea, in the neighbourhood of Selma.—In this paragraph are mentioned the ſignals preſented to Fingal, by thoſe who came to demand his aid. The ſuppliants held, in one hand, a ſhield covered with blood, and, in the other, a broken ſpear; the firſt a ſymbol of the death of their friends, the laſt an emblem of their own helpleſs ſituation. If the king choſe to grant ſuccours, which generally was the caſe, he reached to them *the ſhell of feaſts*, as a token of his hoſpitality and friendly intentions towards them.

It may not be diſagreeable to the reader to lay here before him the ceremony of the Cran-tara, which was of a ſimilar nature, and, till very lately, uſed in the Highlands.—When the news of an enemy came to the reſidence of the chief, he immediately killed a goat with his own ſword, dipped the end of an half-burnt piece of wood in the blood, and gave it to one of his ſervants, to be carried to the next hamlet. From hamlet to hamlet this *teſſera* was carried with the utmoſt expedition, and, in the ſpace of a few hours, the whole clan were in arms, and convened in an appointed place; the name of which was the only word that accompanied the delivery of the *Cran-tara*. This ſymbol was the manifeſto of the chief, by which he threatened fire and ſword to thoſe of his clan, that did not immediately appear at his ſtandard.

In his hall lies Cathmol of Clutha, by the winding of his own dark ſtreams. Duth-carmor ſaw white-boſomed Lánul (1), and pierced her father's ſide. In the rushy deſart were my ſteps. He fled in the ſeaſon of night. Give thine aid to Cathlin to revenge his father. — I ſought thee not as a beam, in a land of clouds. Thou, like that ſun, art known, king of echoing Selma.

Selma's king looked around. In his preſence, we roſe in arms. But who should lift the shield? for all had claimed the war. The night came down; we ſtrode, in ſilence; each to his hill of ghoſts: that ſpirits might deſcend, in our dreams, to mark us for the field.

We ſtruck the shield of the dead, and raiſed the hum of ſongs. We thrice called the ghoſts of our fathers. We laid us down in dreams. — Trenmor came, before mine eyes, the tall form of other years. His blue hoſts were behind him in half-diſtinguished rows. Scarce ſeen is their ſtrife in miſt, or their ſtretching forward to deaths. I liſtened; but

(1) Lánul, *full-eyed*, a ſurname which, according to tradition, was beſtowed on the daughter of Cathmol, on account of her beauty; this tradition, however, may have been founded on that partiality, which the bards have shewn to *Cathlin of Clutha*; for according to them, no *falshood could dwell in the ſoul of the lovely*.

no ſound was there. The forms were empty wind.

I ſtarted from the dream of ghoſts. On a ſudden blaſt flew my whiſtling hair. Low-ſounding, in the oak, is the departure of the dead. I took my ſhield from its bough. Onward came the rattling of ſteel. It was Oſcar (1) of Lego. He had ſeen his fathers.

As rushes forth the blaſt, on the boſom of whitening waves; ſo careleſs ſhall my courſe be, thro' ocean, to the dwelling of foes. I have ſeen the dead, my father. My beating ſoul is high. My fame is bright before me, like the ſtreak of light on a cloud, when the broad ſun comes forth, red traveller of the ſky.

Grandſon of Branno, I ſaid, not Oſcar alone ſhall meet the foe. I rush forward, thro' ocean, to the woody dwelling of heroes. Let us contend, my ſon, like eagles, from one rock; when they lift their broad wings,

(1) Oſcar is here called *Oſcar of Lego*, from his mother being the daughter of Branno, a powerful chief, on the banks of that lake. It is remarkable that Oſſian addreſſes no poem to Malvina, in which her lover Oſcar was not one of the principal actors. His attention to her, after the death of his ſon, ſhews that delicacy of ſentiment is not confined, as ſome fondly imagine, to our own polished times.

againſt the ſtream of winds. — We raiſed our ſails in Carmona. From three ſhips, they marked my ſhield on the wave, as I looked on nightly Ton-thena (1), red wanderer between the clouds. — Four days came the breeze abroad. Lumon came forward in miſt. In winds were its hundred groves. Sun-beams marked, at times, its brown ſide. White, leapt the foamy ſtreams from all its echoing rocks.

A green field, in the boſom of hills, winds ſilent with its own blue-ſtream. Here, midſt the waving of oaks, were the dwellings of kings of old. But ſilence, for many dark-brown years, had ſettled in graſſy Rath-col (2),

(1) Ton-thena, *fire of the wave*, was that remarkable ſtar, which, as has been mentioned in the ſeventh book of Temora, directed the courſe of Larthon to Ireland. It ſeems to have been well known to thoſe, who ſailed on that ſea, which divides Ireland from South-Britain. As the courſe of Oſſian was along the coaſt of Inis-huna, he mentions with propriety, that ſtar which directed the voyage of the colony from that country to Ireland.

(2) Rath-col, *woody field*, does not appear to have been the reſidence of Duth-carmor: he ſeems rather to have been forced thither by a ſtorm; at leaſt I ſhould think that to be the meaning of the poet, from his expreſſion, that *Ton-thena had hid her head*, and that *he bound his white-boſomed ſails*; which is as much as to ſay, that the weather was ſtormy, and that Duth-carmor put into the bay of Rath-col for ſhelter.

for the

for the race of heroes had failed, along the pleaſant vale. — Duth-carmor was here, with his people, dark rider of the wave. Tonthena had hid her head in the ſky. He bound his white-boſomed ſails. His courſe is on the hills of Rath-col, to the ſeats of roes.

We came. I ſent the bard, with ſongs, to call the foe to fight. Duth-carmor heard him, with joy. The king's ſoul was a beam of fire; a beam of fire, marked with ſmoak, rushing, varied, thro' the boſom of night. The deeds of Duth-carmor were dark, tho' his arm was ſtrong.

Night came, with the gathering of clouds. By the beam of the oak we ſat down. At a diſtance ſtood Cathlin of Clutha. I ſaw the changing (1) ſoul of the ſtranger. As shadows fly over the field of graſs, ſo various is Cathlin's

(1) From this circumſtance, ſucceeding bards feigned that Cathlin, who is here in the diſguiſe of a young warrior, had fallen in love with Duth-carmor at a feaſt, to which he had been invited by her father. Her love was converted into deteſtation for him, after he had murdered her father. But *as thoſe rain-bows of heaven are changeful*, ſay my authors, ſpeaking of women, ſhe felt the return of her former paſſion, upon the approach of Duth-carmor's danger. — I myſelf, who think more favourably of the ſex, muſt attribute the agitation of Cathlin's mind to her extream ſenſibility to the injuries done her by Duth-carmor: and this opinion is favoured by the ſequel of the ſtory.

cheek. It was fair, within locks, that roſe on Rath-col's wind. I did not ruſh, amidſt his ſoul, with my words. I bade the ſong to riſe.

Oſcar of Lego, I ſaid, be thine the ſecret hill (1), to night. Strike the ſhield, like Morven's kings. With day, thou ſhalt lead in war. From my rock, I ſhall ſee thee, Oſcar, a dreadful form aſcending in fight, like the appearance of ghoſts, amidſt the ſtorms they raiſe. — Why ſhould mine eyes return to the dim times of old, ere yet the ſong had burſted forth, like the ſudden riſing of winds. — But the years, that are paſt, are marked with mighty deeds. As the nightly rider of waves looks up to Ton-thena of beams: ſo let us turn our eyes to Trenmor, the father of kings.

(1) This paſſage alludes to the well known cuſtom among the ancient kings of Scotland, to retire from their army on the night preceding a battle. — The ſtory which Oſſian introduces in the next paragraph, concerns the fall of the Druids, of which I gave ſome account in the diſſertation prefixed to the preceding volume. It is ſaid in many old poems, that the Druids, in the extremity of their affairs, had ſolicited and obtained aid from Scandinavia. Among the auxiliaries there came many pretended magicians, which circumſtance Oſſian alludes to, in his deſcription of the *ſon of Loda*. — Magic and incantation could not, however, prevail: for Trenmor, aſſiſted by the valour of his ſon Trathal, entirely broke the power of the Druids.

Wide, in Caracha's echoing field, Carmal had poured his tribes. They were a dark ridge of waves; the grey-haired bards were like moving foam on their face. They kindled the ſtrife around with their red-rolling eyes. — Nor alone were the dwellers of rocks; a ſon of Loda was there; a voice, in his own dark land, to call the ghoſts from high. — On his hill, he had dwelt, in Lochlin, in the midſt of a leafleſs grove. Five ſtones lifted, near, their heads. Loud-roared his rushing ſtream. He often raiſed his voice to winds, when meteors marked their nightly wings; when the dark-cruſted moon was rolled behind her hill. Nor unheard of ghoſts was he! — They came with the ſound of eagle-wings. They turned battle, in fields, before the kings of men.

But, Trenmor, they turned not from battle; he drew forward the troubled war; in its dark skirt was Trathal, like a riſing light. — It was dark; and Loda's ſon poured forth his ſigns, on night. — The feeble were not before thee, ſon of other lands!

(1) Then roſe the ſtrife of kings, about the hill of night; but it was ſoft as two ſummer gales, shaking their light wings, on a lake.

(1) Trenmor and Trathal. Oſſian introduced this epiſode, as an example to his ſon, from ancient times.

— Trenmor yielded to his ſon; for the fame of the king was heard. — Trathal came forth before his father, and the foes failed, in echoing Carácha. The years that are paſt, my ſon, are marked with mighty deeds. (1)

. . . . . .

In clouds roſe the eaſtern light. The foe came forth in arms. The ſtrife is mixed at Rath-col, like the roar of ſtreams. Behold the contending of kings! They meet beſide the oak. In gleams of ſteel the dark forms are loſt; ſuch is the meeting of meteors, in a vale by night: red light is ſcattered round, and men foreſee the ſtorm. — Duth-carmor is low in blood. The ſon of Oſſian overcame. Not harmleſs in battle was he, Malvina hand of harps!

Nor, in the field, are the ſteps of Cathlin. The ſtranger ſtood by a ſecret ſtream, where the foam of Rath-col skirted the moſſy ſtones. Above, bends the branchy birch, and ſtrews its leaves, on winds. The inverted ſpear of Cathlin touched, at times, the ſtream. — Oſcar

(1) Thoſe who deliver down this poem in tradition, lament that there is a great part of it loſt. In particular they regret the loſs of an epiſode, which was here introduced, with the ſequel of the ſtory of Carmal and his Druids. Their attachment to it was founded on the deſcriptions of magical inchantments which it contained.

brought Duth-carmor's mail: his helmet with its eagle-wing. He placed them before the ſtranger, and his words were heard.—«The foes of thy father have failed. They are laid in the field of ghoſts. Renown returns to Morven, like a riſing wind. Why art thou dark, chief of Clutha? Is there cauſe for grief?»

Son of Oſſian of harps, my ſoul is darkly ſad. I behold the arms of Cathmol, which he raiſed in war. Take the male of Cathlin, place it high in Selma's hall; that thou mayſt remember the hapleſs in thy diſtant land.

From white breaſts deſcended the mail. It was the race of kings; the ſoft-handed daughter of Cathmol, at the ſtreams of Clutha.—Duth-carmor ſaw her bright in the hall, he came, by night, to Clutha. Cathmol met him, in battle, but the warrior fell. Three days dwelt the foe, with the maid. On the fourth she fled in arms. She remembered the race of kings, and felt her burſting ſoul.

Why, maid of Toſcar of Lutha, should I tell how Cathlin failed? Her tomb is at rushy Lumon, in a diſtant land. Near it were the ſteps of Sul-malla, in the days of grief. She raiſed the ſong, for the daughter of ſtrangers, and touched the mournful harp.

Come, from the watching of night, Malvina, lonely beam!

SUL-MALLA

OF

LUMON:

A

POEM.

ARGUMENT.

This poem, which, properly ſpeaking, is a continuation of the laſt, opens with an addreſs to Sul-malla, the daughter of the king of Inis-huna, whom Oſſian met, at the chace, as he returned from the battle of Rath-col. Sul-malla invites Oſſian and Oſcar to a feaſt, at the reſidence of her father, who was then abſent in the wars. — Upon hearing their name and family, she relates an expedition of Fingal into Inis-huna. She caſually mentioning Cathmor, chief of Atha, (who then aſſiſted her father againſt his enemies) Oſſian introduces the epiſode of Culgorm and Surandronlo, two Scandinavian kings, in whoſe wars Oſſian himſelf and Cathmor were engaged on oppoſite ſides. — The ſtory is imperfect, a part of the original being loſt. — Oſſian, warned, in a dream, by the ghoſt of Trenmor, ſets ſail from Inis-huna.

SUL-MALLA

OF

LUMON:

A

POEM.

(1) WHO moves ſo ſtately, on Lumon, at the roar of the foamy waters? Her hair falls upon her heaving breaſt. White is her

(1) The expedition of Oſſian to Inis-huna happened a ſhort time before Fingal paſſed over into Ireland, to dethrone Cairbar, the ſon of Borbarduthul. Cathmor, the brother of Cairbar, was aiding Conmor, king of Inis-huna, in his wars, at the time that Oſſian defeated Duth-carmor, in the valley of Rath-col. The poem is more intereſting, that it contains ſo many particulars concerning thoſe perſonages, who make ſo great a figure in Temora.

The exact correſpondence in the manners and cuſtoms of Inis-huna, as here deſcribed, to thoſe of Caledonia, leaves no room to doubt, that the inhabitants of both were originally the ſame people. Some may alledge, that Oſſian might transfer, in his poetical deſcriptions, the manners of his own

arm behind, as ſlow she bends the bow. Why doſt thou wander in deſarts, like a light thro' a cloudy field? The young roes are panting, by their ſecret rocks.—Return, thou daughter of kings; the cloudy night is near.

It was the young branch of Lumon, Sul-malla of blue eyes. She ſent the bard from her rock, to bid us to her feaſt. Amidſt the ſong we ſat down, in Conmor's echoing hall. White moved the hands of Sul-malla, on the trembling ſtrings. Half-heard, amidſt the ſound, was the name of Atha's king: he that was abſent in battle for her own green land. —Nor abſent from her ſoul was he: he came midſt her thoughts by night: Ton-thena looked in, from the sky, and ſaw her toſſing arms.

The ſound of the shells had ceaſed. Amidſt long locks, Sul-malla roſe. She ſpoke with bended eyes, and asked of our courſe thro'

nation to foreigners. The objection is eaſily anſwered: for had Oſſian uſed that freedom in this paſſage, there is no reaſon why he should paint the manners of the Scandinavians ſo different from thoſe of the Caledonians. We find however, the former very different in their cuſtoms and ſuperſtitions from the nations of Britain and Ireland. The Scandinavian manners are remarkably barbarous and fierce, and ſeem to mark out a nation much leſs advanced in civil ſociety, than the inhabitants of Britain were in the times of Oſſian.

ſeas; « for of the kings of men are ye, tall riders of the wave (1).» — Not unknown, I ſaid, at his ſtreams is he, the father of our race. Fingal has been heard of at Cluba, blue-eyed daughter of kings. — Nor only, at Cona's ſtream, is Oſſian and Oſcar known. Foes trembled at our voice, and shrunk in other lands.

Not unmarked, ſaid the maid, by Sul-malla, is the shield of Morven's king. It hangs high, in Conmor's hall, in memory of the paſt; when Fingal came to Cluba, in the

(1) Sul-malla here diſcovers the quality of Oſſian and Oſcar, from their ſtature and ſtately gait. Among nations, not far advanced in civilization, a ſuperior beauty and ſtatelineſs of perſon were inſeparable from nobility of blood. It was from theſe qualities, that thoſe of family were known by ſtrangers, not from tawdry trappings of ſtate injudiciouſly thrown round them. The cauſe of this diſtinguishing property, muſt, in ſome meaſure, be aſcribed to their unmixed blood. They had no inducement to intermarry with the vulgar: and no low notions of intereſt made them deviate from their choice, in their own ſphere. In ſtates, where luxury has been long eſtabliſhed, I am told, that beauty of perſon is, by no means, the characteriſtic of antiquity of family. This muſt be attributed to thoſe enervating vices, which are inſeparable from luxury and wealth. A great family, (to alter a little the words of the hiſtorian) it is true, like a river, becomes conſiderable from the length of its courſe, but, as it rolls on, hereditary diſtempers, as well as property, flow ſucceſſively into it.

days of other years. Loud roared the boar of Culdarnu, in the midſt of his rocks and woods. Inis-huna ſent her youths, but they failed; and virgins wept over tombs. — Careleſs went the king to Culdarnu. On his ſpear roiled the ſtrength of the woods. — He was bright, they ſaid, in his locks, the firſt of mortal men. — Nor at the feaſt were heard his words. His deeds paſſed from his ſoul of fire, like the rolling of vapours from the face of the wandering ſun. — Not careleſs looked the blue eyes of Cluba on his ſtately ſteps. In white boſoms roſe the king of Selma, in midſt of their thoughts by night. But the winds bore the ſtranger to the echoing vales of his roes. — Nor loſt to other lands was he, like a meteor that ſinks in a cloud. He came forth, at times, in his brightneſs, to the diſtant dwelling of foes. His fame came, like the ſound of winds, to Cluba's woody vale. (1)

(1) Too partial to our own times, we are ready to mark out remote antiquity, as the region of ignorance and barbariſm. This, perhaps, is extending our prejudices too far. It has been long remarked, that knowledge, in a great meaſure, is founded on a free intercourſe between mankind; and that the mind is enlarged in proportion to the obſervations it has made upon the manners of different men and nations. — If we look, with attention, into the hiſtory of Fingal, as delivered by Oſſian, we ſhall find that he was not altogether a poor ignorant hunter, confined to the narrow corner of an iſland. His

Darkneſs dwells in Cluba of harps: the race of kings is diſtant far; in battle is Conmor of ſpears; and Lormar (1) king of ſtreams. Nor darkening alone are they; a beam, from other lands, is nigh: the friend (2) of ſtrangers in Atha, the troubler of the field. High, from their miſty hills, look forth the blue eyes of Erin, for he is far away, young

expeditions to all parts of Scandinavia, to the north of Germany, and the different ſtates of Great Britain and Ireland, were very numerous, and performed under ſuch a character, and at ſuch times, as gave him an opportunity to mark the undiſguiſed manners of mankind. —— War and an active life, as they call forth, by turns, all the powers of the ſoul, preſent to us the different characters of men: in times of peace and quiet, for want of objects to exert them, the powers of the mind lie concealed, in a great meaſure, and we ſee only artificial paſſions and manners. —— It is from this conſideration I conclude, that a traveller of penetration could gather more genuine knowledge from a tour of ancient Gaul, than from the minuteſt obſervation of all the artificial manners, and elegant refinements of modern France.

(1) Lormar was the ſon of Conmor, and the brother of Sul-malla. After the death of Conmor, Lormar ſucceeded him in the throne.

(2) Cathmor, the ſon of Borbar-duthul. It would appear, from the partiality with which Sul-malla ſpeaks of that hero, that ſhe had ſeen him, previous to his joining her father's army; tho' tradition poſitively aſſerts, that it was, after his return, that ſhe fell in love with him.

dweller of their ſouls. — Nor, harmleſs, white hands of Erin! is he in the skirts of war; he rolls ten thouſand before him, in his diſtant field.

Not unſeen by Oſſian, I ſaid, rushed Cathmor from his ſtreams, when he poured his ſtrength on I-thorno (1), iſle of many waves. In ſtrife met two kings in I-thorno, Culgorm and Suran-dronlo: each from his echoing iſle, ſtern hunters of the boar!

They met a boar, at a foamy ſtream: each pierced it with his ſteel. They ſtrove for the fame of the deed: and gloomy battle roſe. From iſle to iſle they ſent a ſpear, broken and ſtained with blood, to call the friends of their fathers, in their ſounding arms. Cathmor came, from Bolga, to Culgorm, red-eyed king: I aided Suran-dronlo, in his land of boars.

(1) I-thorno, ſays tradition, was an iſland of Scandinavia. In it, at a hunting party, met Culgorm and Suran-dronlo, the kings of two neighbouring iſles. They differed about the honour of killing a boar; and a war was kindled between them. — From this epiſode we may learn, that the manners of the Scandinavians were much more ſavage and cruel, than thoſe of Britain. —— It is remarkable, that the names, introduced in this ſtory, are not of Galic original, which circumſtance affords room to ſuppoſe, that it had its foundation in true hiſtory.

We rushed on either ſide of a ſtream, which roared thro' a blaſted heath. High broken rocks were round, with all their bending trees. Near are two circles of Loda, with the ſtone of power; where ſpirits deſcended, by night, in dark-red ſtreams of fire.— There, mixed with the murmur of waters, roſe the voice of aged men, they called the forms of night, to aid them in their war.

(1) Heedleſs I ſtood, with my people, where fell the foamy ſtream from rocks. The moon moved red from the mountain. My ſong, at times, aroſe. Dark on the other ſide, young Cathmor heard my voice; for he lay, beneath the oak, in all his gleaming arms.— Morning came; we rushed to fight: from wing to wing is the rolling of ſtrife. They fell, like the thiſtle-head, beneath autumnal winds.

In armour came a ſtately form: I mixed my ſtrokes with the king. By turns our shields are pierced: loud rung our ſteely mails. His

(1) From the circumſtance of Oſſian not being preſent at the rites, deſcribed in the preceding paragraph, we may ſuppoſe that he held them in contempt. This difference of ſentiment, with regard to religion, is a ſort of argument, that the Caledonians were not originally a colony of Scandinavians, as ſome have imagined. Concerning ſo remote a period, mere conjecture muſt ſupply the place of argument and poſitive proofs.

helmet fell to the ground. In brightneſs shone the foe. His eyes, two pleaſant flames, rolled between his wandering locks. — I knew the king of Atha, and threw my ſpear on earth. — Dark, we turned, and ſilent paſſed to mix with other foes.

Not ſo paſſed the ſtriving kings (1). They mixed in echoing fray; like the meeting of ghoſts, in the dark wing of winds. Thro' either breaſt rushed the ſpears; nor yet lay the foes on earth. A rock received their fall; and half-reclined they lay in death. Each held the lock of his foe; and grimly ſeemed to roll his eyes. The ſtream of the rock leapt on their shields, and mixed below with blood.

The battle ceaſed in I-thorno. The ſtrangers met in peace: Cathmor from Atha of ſtreams, and Oſſian, king of harps. We placed the dead in earth. Our ſteps were by Rùnar's bay. With the bounding boat, afar, advanced a ridgy wave. Dark was the rider of ſeas, but a beam of light was there, like

(1) Culgorm and Suran-dronlo. The combat of the kings and their attitude in death are highly picturesque, and expreſſive of that ferocity of manners, which diſtinguished the northern nations. — The wild melody of the verſification of the original, is inimitably beautiful, and very different from the reſt of the works of Oſſian.

the ray of the ſun, in Stromlo's rolling ſmoak. It was the daughter (1) of Suran-

(1) Tradition has handed down the name of this princeſs. The bards call her Runo-forlo, which has no other ſort of title for being genuine, but its not being of Galic original; a diſtinction, which the bards had not the art to preſerve, when they feigned names for foreigners. The highland ſenachies, who very often endeavoured to ſupply the deficiency, they thought they found in the tales of Oſſian, have given us the continuation of the ſtory of the daughter of Suran-dronlo. The cataſtrophe is ſo unnatural, and the circumſtances of it ſo ridiculouſly pompous, that for the ſake of the inventors, I ſhall conceal them.

The wildly beautiful appearance of Runo-frolo, made a deep impreſſion on a chief, ſome ages ago, who was himſelf no contemptible poet. The ſtory is romantic, but not incredible, if we make allowances for the lively imagination of a man of genius. Our chief ſailing, in a ſtorm, along one of the iſlands of Orkney, ſaw a woman, in a boat, near the ſhore, whom he thought, as he expreſſes it himſelf, *as beautiful as a ſudden ray of the ſun, on the dark-heaving deep.* The verſes of Oſſian, on the attitude of Runo-forlo, which was ſo ſimilar to that of the woman in the boat, wrought ſo much on his fancy, that he fell deſperately in love. —— The winds, however, drove him from the coaſt, and, after a few days, he arrived at his reſidence in Scotland. —— There his paſſion increaſed to ſuch a degree, that two of his friends, fearing the conſequence, ſailed to the Orkneys, to carry to him the object of his deſire. —— Upon enquiry they ſoon found the nymph, and carried her to the enamoured chief; but mark his ſurprize, when, inſtead *of a ray of*

dronlo, wild in brightned looks. Her eyes were wandering flames, amidſt diſordered locks. Forward is her white arm, with the ſpear; her high-heaving breaſt is ſeen, white as foamy waves that riſe, by turns, amidſt rocks. They are beautiful, but they are terrible, and mariners call the winds.

Come, ye dwellers of Loda! Carchar, pale in the midſt of clouds! Sluthmor, that ſtrideſt in airy halls! Corchtur, terrible in winds! Receive, from his daughter's ſpear, the foes of Suran-dronlo.

No shadow, at his roaring ſtreams; no mildly-looking form was he! When he took up his ſpear, the hawks shook their ſounding wings: for blood was poured around the ſteps of dark-eyed Suran-dronlo.

He lighted me, no harmleſs beam, to glitter on his ſtreams. Like meteors, I was bright, but I blaſted the foes of Suran-dronlo

— . . . . . .

Nor unconcerned heard Sul-malla, the praiſe of Cathmor of shields. He was within

the ſun, he ſaw a skinny fiſher-woman, more than middle aged, appearing before him. — Tradition here ends the ſtory: but it may be eaſily ſuppoſed that the paſſion of the chief ſoon ſubſided.

her ſoul, like a fire in ſecret heath, which awakes at the voice of the blaſt, and ſends its beam abroad. Amidſt the ſong removed the daughter of kings, like the ſoft ſound of a ſummer-breeze; when it lifts the heads of flowers, and curls the lakes aud ſtreams.

By night came a dream to Oſſian; without form ſtood the shadow of Trenmor. He ſeemed to ſtrike the dim shield, on Selma's ſtreamy rock. I roſe, in my rattling ſteel; I knew that war was near. Before the winds our ſails were ſpread; when Lumon shewed its ſtreams to the morn.

Come from the watching of night, Malvina, lonely beam!

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN FIRST.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal, in one of his voyages to the Orkney iſlands, was driven, by ſtreſs of weather, into a bay of Scandinavia, near the reſidence of Starno, king of Lochlin. Starno invites Fingal to a feaſt. Fingal, doubting the faith of the king, and mindful of his former breach of hoſpitality, [*Fingal, b.* 3.] *refuſes to go. — Starno gathers together his tribes: Fingal reſolves to defend himſelf. — Night coming on, Duth-maruno propoſes to Fingal, to obſerve the motions of the enemy. — The king himſelf undertakes the watch. Advancing towards the enemy, he, accidentally, comes to the cave of Turthor, where Starno had confined Conban-carglas, the captive daughter of a neighbouring chief. — Her ſtory is imperfect, a part of the original being loſt. — Fingal comes to a place of worſhip, where Starno and his ſon, Swaran, conſulted the ſpirit of Loda, concerning the iſſue of the war. — The rencounter of Fingal and Swaran. — The* duan *concludes, with a deſcription of the airy hall of Cruth-loda ſuppoſed to be the Odin of Scandinavia.*

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN (1) FIRST.

A TALE of the times of old! —Why, thou wanderer unſeen, that bendeſt the thiſtle of Lora, —why, thou breeze of the

(1) The bards diſtinguiſhed thoſe compoſitions, in which the narration is often interrupted, by epiſodes and apoſtrophes, by the name of *Duan*. Since the extinction of the order of the bards, it has been a general name for all ancient compoſitions in verſe. —— The abrupt manner in which the ſtory of this poem begins, may render it obſcure to ſome readers; it may not therefore be improper, to give here the traditional preface, which is generally prefixed to it. Two years after he took to wife Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, king of Ireland, Fingal undertook an expedition into Orkney, to viſit his friend Cathulla, king of Iniſtore. After ſtaying a few days at Carric-thura, the reſidence of Cathulla, the king ſet ſail, to return to Scotland; but a violent ſtorm ariſing, his ships were driven into a bay of Scandinavia, near Gormal, the ſeat of Starno, king of Lochlin, his avowed enemy. Starno, upon the appearance of ſtrangers on his coaſt, ſummoned together the neighbouring tribes,

valley, haſt thou left mine ear? I hear no diſtant roar of ſtreams, no ſound of the harp, from the rocks! Come, thou huntreſs of Lutha, ſend back his ſoul to the bard.

I look forward to Lochlin of lakes, to the dark, ridgy bay of U-thórno, where Fingal deſcended from ocean, from the roar of winds. Few are the heroes of Morven, in a land unknown! — Starno ſent a dweller of Loda, to bid Fingal to the feaſt; but the king remembered the paſt, and all his rage aroſe.

Nor Gormal's moſſy towers, nor Starno ſhall Fingal behold. Deaths wander, like ſhadows, over his fiery ſoul. Do I forget that beam of light, the white-handed daughter of (1) kings? Go, ſon of Loda; his words are but blaſts to Fingal: blaſts, that, to and fro, roll the thiſtle, in autumnal vales.

and advanced, in a hoſtile manner, towards the bay of U-thorno, where Fingal had taken ſhelter. Upon diſcovering who the ſtrangers were, and fearing the valour of Fingal, which he had, more than once, experienced before, he reſolved to accompliſh by treachery, what he was afraid he ſhould fail in by open force. He invited, therefore, Fingal to a feaſt, at which he intended to aſſaſſinate him. The king prudently declined to go, and Starno betook himſelf to arms. —— The ſequel of the ſtory may be learned from the poem itſelf.

(1) Agandecca, the daughter of Starno, whom Duth-maruno (1)

Duth-maruno (1), arm of death! Cromma-glas, of iron shields! Struthmor, dweller of battle's wing! Cormar, whoſe ships bound on ſeas, careleſs as the courſe of a meteor, on dark ſtreaming clouds! Ariſe, around me, children of heroes, in a land unknown. Let each look on his shield, like Trenmor, the ruler of battles. « Come down, ſaid the king, thou dweller between the harps. Thou ſhalt roll this ſtream away, or dwell with me in earth. »

Around him they roſe in wrath. — No words came forth; they ſeized their ſpears.

her father killed, on account of her diſcovering to Fingal, a plot laid againſt his life. Her ſtory is related at large, in the third book of Fingal.

(1) Duth-maruno is a name very famous in tradition. Many of his great actions are handed down; but the poems, which contained the detail of them, are long ſince loſt. He lived, it is ſuppoſed, in that part of the north of Scotland, which is over againſt Orkney. Duth-maruno, Cromma-glas, Struthmor, and Cormar, are mentioned, as attending Comhal, in his laſt battle againſt the tribe of Morni, in a poem, which is ſtill preſerved. It is not the work of Oſſian; the phraſeology betrays it to be a modern compoſition. It is ſomething like thoſe trivial compoſitions, which the Iriſh bards forged, under the name of Oſſian, in the fifteenth and ſixteenth centuries. — Duth-maruno ſignifies, *black and ſteady*; Cromma-glas, *bending and ſwarthy*; Struthmor, *roaring ſtream*; Cormar, *expert at ſea*.

Each ſoul is rolled into itſelf. — At length the ſudden clang is waked, on all their echoing shields. — Each took his hill, by night; at intervals, they darkly ſtood. Unequal burſts the hum of ſongs, between the roaring wind. — Broad over them roſe the moon. — In his arms, came tall Duth-maruno; he from Croma-charn of rocks, ſtern hunter of the boar. In his dark boat he roſe on waves, when Crumthormoth (1) awaked its woods. In the chace he shone, among his foes: — No fear was thine, Duth-maruno.

Son of Comhal, he ſaid, my ſteps shall be forward thro' night. From this shield I shall view them, over their gleaming tribes. Starno, of lakes, is before me, and Swaran, the foe of ſtrangers. Their words are not in vain, by Loda's ſtone of power. — If Duth-maruno returns not, his ſpouſe is lonely, at home, where meet two roaring ſtreams, on Crathmo-craulo's plain. Around are hills, with their woods; the ocean is rolling near. My ſon looks on ſcreaming ſea-fowl, young wanderer of the field. Give the head of a boar to Can dona (2), tell him

(1) Crumthormoth, one of the Orkney or Shetland iſlands. The name is not of Galic original. It was ſubject to its own petty king, who is mentioned in one of Oſſian's poems.

(2) Cean-deano, *head of the people*, the ſon of

of his father's joy, when the briſtly ſtrength of I-thorno rolled on his lifted ſpear.

Duth maruno. He became afterwards famous, in the expeditions of Oſſian, after the death of Fingal. The traditional tales concerning him are very numerous, and, from the epithet, in them, beſtowed on him (*Candona of boars*) it would appear, that he applied himſelf to that kind of hunting, which his father, in this paragraph, is ſo anxious to recommend to him. As I have mentioned the traditional tales of the Highlands, it may not be improper here, to give ſome account of them. After the expulſion of the bards, from the houſes of the chiefs, they being an indolent race of men, owed all their ſubſiſtence to the generoſity of the vulgar, whom they diverted with repeating the compoſitions of their predeceſſors, and running up the genealogies of their entertainers to the family of their chiefs. As this ſubject was, however, ſoon exhauſted, they were obliged to have recourſe to invention, and form ſtories having no foundation in fact which were ſwallowed, with great credulity, by an ignorant multitude. By frequent repeating, the fable grew upon their hands, and, as each threw in whatever circumſtance he thought conducive to raiſe the admiration of his hearers, the ſtory became, at laſt, ſo devoid of all probability, that even the vulgar themſelves did not believe it. They, however, liked the tales ſo well, that the bards found their advantage in turning profeſſed tale-makers. They then launched out into the wildeſt regions of fiction and romance. I firmly believe, there are more ſtories of giants, enchanted caſtles, dwarfs, and palfreys, in the Highlands, than in any country in Europe. Theſe tales, it is certain, like other romantic compoſitions, have many things in them unnatural, and, conſequently, diſguſtful

Not forgetting my fathers, ſaid Fingal, I have bounded over ridgy ſeas: theirs was the times of danger, in the days of old. Nor gathers darkneſs on me, before foes, tho' I am young, in my locks.—Chief of Crathmo-craulo, the field of night is mine.

He rushed, in all his arms, wide-bounding over Turthor's ſtream, that ſent its ſullen roar, by night, thro' Gormal's miſty vale.—A moon-beam glittered on a rock; in the midſt, ſtood a ſtately form; a form with floating locks, like Lochlin's white-boſomed maids.—Unequal are her ſteps, and ſhort: ſhe throws a broken ſong on wind. At times ſhe toſſes her white arms: for grief is in her ſoul.

Torcul-torno (1), of aged locks! where

to true taſte, but, I know not how it happens, they command attention more than any other fictions I ever met with.—The extream length of theſe pieces is very ſurpriſing, ſome of them requiring many days to repeat them, but ſuch hold they take of the memory, that few circumſtances are ever omitted by thoſe who have received them only from oral tradition. What is more amazing, the very language of the bards is ſtill preſerved. It is curious to ſee, that the deſcriptions of magnificence, introduced in theſe tales, is even ſuperior to all the pompous oriental fictions of the kind.

(1) Torcul-torno, according to tradition, was

now are thy ſteps, by Lulan? thou haſt failed, at thine own dark ſtreams, father of Conban-carglas! — But I behold thee, chief of Lulan, ſporting by Loda's hall, when the dark-skirted night is poured along the sky.

Thou, ſometimes, hideſt the moon, with

king of Crathlun, a diſtrict in Sweden. The river Lulan ran near the reſidence of Torcul-torno. There is a river in Sweden, ſtill called Lula, which is probably the ſame with Lulan. The war between Starno and Torcul-torno, which terminated in the death of the latter, had its riſe at a hunting party. Starno being invited, in a friendly manner, by Torcul-torno, both kings, with their followers, went to the mountains of Stivamor, to hunt. A boar rushed from the wood before the kings, and Torcul-torno killed it. Starno thought this behaviour a breach upon the privilege of gueſts, who were always *honoured*, as tradition expreſſes it, *with the danger of the chace*. A quarrel aroſe, the kings came to battle, with all their attendants, and the party of Torcul-torno were totally defeated, and he himſelf ſlain. Starno purſued his victory, laid waſte the diſtrict of Crathlun, and, coming to the reſidence of Torcul-torno, carried off, by force, Conban-carglas, the beautiful daughter of his enemy. Her he confined in a cave, near the palace of Gormal, where, on account of her cruel treatment, she became diſtracted.

The paragraph, juſt now before us, is the ſong of Conban-carglas, at the time she was diſcovered by Fingal. It is in Lyric meaſure, and ſet to muſic, which is wild and ſimple, and ſo inimitably ſuited to the ſituation of the unhappy lady, that few can hear it without tears.

thy shield. I have ſeen her dim, in heaven. Thou kindleſt thy hair into meteors, and ſaileſt along the night. — Why am I forgot in my cave, king of shaggy boars? Look from the hall of Loda, on lonely Conban-carglas.

« Who art thou, ſaid Fingal, voice of night? » — She trembling, turned away. « Who art thou, in thy darkneſs? » — She shrunk into the cave. — The king looſed the thong from her hands; he asked about her fathers.

Torcul-torno, she ſaid, once dwelt at Lulan's foamy ſtream: he dwelt — but, now, in Loda's hall, he shakes the ſounding shell. He met Starno of Lochlin, in battle; long fought the dark-eyed kings. My father fell, at length, blue-shielded Torcul-torno.

By a rock, at Lulan's ſtream, I had pierced the bounding roe. My white hand gathered my hair, from off the ſtream of winds. I heard a noiſe. Mine eyes were up. My ſoft breaſt roſe on high. My ſtep was forward, at Lulan, to meet thee, Torcul-torno!

It was Starno, dreadful king! — His red eyes rolled on Conban-carglas. Dark waved his shaggy brow, above his gathered ſmile. Where is my father, I ſaid, he that was

mighty in war? Thou are left alone among foes, daughter of Torcul-torno!

He took my hand. He raiſed the ſail. In this cave he placed me dark. At times, he comes, a gathered miſt. He lifts, before me, my father's ſhield. Often paſſes a beam (1) of youth, far-diſtant from my cave. He dwells lonely in the ſoul of the daughter of Torcul-torno.

Daughter of Lulan, ſaid Fingal, white-handed Conban-carglas; a cloud, marked with ſtreaks of fire, is rolled along the ſoul. Look not to that dark-robed moon; nor yet to thoſe meteors of heaven; my gleaming ſteel is around thee, daughter of Torcul-torno.

It is not the ſteel of the feeble, nor of the dark in ſoul. The maids are not ſhut in our (2) caves of ſtreams; nor toſſing their

(1) By *the beam of youth*, it afterwards appears, that Conban-carglas means Swaran, the ſon of Starno, with whom, during her confinement, ſhe had fallen in love.

(2) From this contraſt, which Fingal draws, between his own nation and the inhabitants of Scandinavia, we may learn, that the former were much leſs barbarous than the latter. This diſtinction is ſo much obſerved throughout the poems of Oſſian, that there can be no doubt, that he followed the

white arms alone. They bend, fair within their locks, above the harps of Selma. Their voice is not in the deſart wild, young light of Torcul-torno.

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Fingal, again, advanced his ſteps, wide thro' the boſom of night, to where the trees of Loda shook amidſt ſqually winds. Three ſtones, with heads of moſs, are there; a ſtream, with foaming courſe; and dreadful, rolled around them, is the dark-red cloud of Loda. From its top looked forward a ghoſt, half-formed of the shadowy ſmoak. He poured his voice, at times, amidſt the roaring ſtream. — Near, bending beneath a blaſted tree, two heroes received his words: Swaran of the lakes, and Starno foe of ſtrangers. — On their dun shields, they darkly leaned: their ſpears are forward in night. Shrill ſounds the blaſt of darkneſs, in Starno's floating beard.

They heard the tread of Fingal. The warriors roſe in arms. « Swaran, lay that wanderer low, ſaid Starno, in his pride. Take the shield of thy father; it is a rock in war. »

real manners of both nations in his own time. At the cloſe of the ſpeech of Fingal, there is a great part of the original loſt.

—Swaran threw his gleaming ſpear: it ſtood fixed in Loda's tree. Then came the foes forward, with ſwords. They mixed their rattling ſteel. Thro' the thongs of Swaran's ſhield rushed the blade (1) of Luno. The ſhield fell rolling on earth. Cleft the helmet (2) fell down. Fingal ſtopt the lifted ſteel. Wrathful ſtood Swaran, unarmed. He rolled his ſilent eyes, and threw his ſword on earth. Then, ſlowly ſtalking over the ſtream, he whiſtled as he went.

Nor unſeen of his father is Swaran. Starno turned away in wrath. His ſhaggy brows waved dark, above his gathered rage. He ſtruck Loda's tree, with his ſpear; he raiſed the hum of ſongs. — They came to the hoſt of Lochlin, each in his own dark path; like two foam-covered ſtreams, from two rainy vales.

To Turthor's plain Fingal returned. Fair roſe the beam of the eaſt. It ſhone on the ſpoils of Lochlin in the hand of the king. From her cave came forth, in her beauty, the daughter of Torcul-torno. She gathered

(1) The ſword of Fingal, ſo called from its maker, Luno of Lochlin.

(2) The helmet of Swaran. The behaviour of Fingal is always conſiſtent with that generoſity of ſpirit which belongs to a hero. He takes no advantage of a foe diſarmed.

her hair from wind; and wildly raiſed her ſong. The ſong of Lulan of ſhells, where once her father dwelt.

She ſaw Starno's bloody ſhield. Gladneſs roſe, a light, on her face. She ſaw the cleft helmet of Swaran (1); ſhe ſhrunk, darkened, from the king.—«Art thou fallen, by thy hundred ſtreams, O love of Conban-carglas!»—

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. . . . . .

U-thorno, that riſeſt in waters, on whoſe ſide are the meteors of night! I behold the dark moon deſcending behind thy echoing woods. On thy top dwells the miſty Loda, the houſe of the ſpirits of men.—In the end of his cloudy hall bends forward Cruth-loda of ſwords. His form is dimly ſeen, amidſt his wavy miſt. His right-hand is on his ſhield: in his left is the half-viewleſs ſhell. The roof

(1) Conban-carglas, from ſeeing the helmet of Swaran bloody in the hands of Fingal, conjectured, that that hero was killed.—A part of the original is loſt. It appears, however, from the ſequel of the poem, that the daughter of Torcul-torno did not long ſurvive her ſurpriſe, occaſioned by the ſuppoſed death of her lover.—The deſcription of the airy hall of Loda (which is ſuppoſed to be the ſame with that of Odin, the deity of Scandinavia) is more picturesque and deſcriptive, than any in the Edda, or other works of the northern Scalders.

of his dreadful hall is marked with nightly fires.

The race of Cruth-loda advance, a ridge of formleſs shades. He reaches the ſounding shell, to thoſe who shone in war; but, between him and the feeble, his shield riſes, a cruſt of darkneſs. He is a ſetting meteor to the weak in arms.—Bright, as a rain-bow on ſtreams, came white-armed Conban-carglas.—

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CATH-LODA;

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN SECOND.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal returning, with day, devolves the command of the army on Duth-maruno, who engages the enemy, and drives them over the ſtream of Turthor. Fingal, after recalling his people, congratulates Duth-maruno on his ſucceſs, but diſcovers, that that hero was mortally wounded in the engagement. — Duth-maruno dies. Ullin, the bard, in honour of the dead, introduces the epiſode of Colgorm and Strina-dona, with which the duan *concludes.*

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN SECOND.

WHERE art thou, ſon of the king, ſaid dark-haired Duth-maruno? Where haſt thou failed, young beam of Selma? — He returns not from the boſom of night! Morning is ſpread on U-thorno: in his miſt is the ſun, on his hill. — Warriors, lift the shields in my preſence. He muſt not fall, like a fire from heaven, whoſe place is not marked on the ground. — He comes like an eagle, from the skirt of his ſqually wind! In his hand are the ſpoils of foes. — King of Selma, our ſouls were ſad.

Near us are the foes, Duth-maruno. They come forward, like waves in miſt, when their foamy tops are ſeen, at times, above the low-ſailing vapour. — The traveller ſhrinks on his journey, and knows not whither to fly. — No trembling travellers are we! — Sons of heroes, call forth the ſteel. — Shall the ſword of Fingal ariſe, or ſhall a warrior lead?

(1) The deeds of old, ſaid Duth-maruno, are like paths to our eyes, O Fingal. Broad-ſhielded Trenmor is ſtill ſeen, amidſt his own dim years. Nor feeble was the ſoul of the king. There, no dark deed wandered in ſecret. — From their hundred ſtreams

(1) In this ſhort epiſode we have a very probable account given us, of the origin of monarchy in Caledonia. The *Caël*, or Gauls, who poſſeſſed the countries to the north of the Firth of Edinburgh, were, originally, a number of diſtinct tribes, or clans, each ſubject to its own chief, who was free and independent of any other power. When the Romans invaded them, the common danger might, perhaps, have induced thoſe *reguli* to join together; but, as they were unwilling to yield to the command of one of their own number, their battles were ill-conducted, and, conſequently, unſucceſsful. —Trenmor was the firſt who repreſented to the chiefs, the bad conſequences of carrying on their wars in this irregular manner, and adviſed, that they themſelves ſhould alternately lead in battle. They did ſo, but they were unſucceſsful. When it came to Trenmor's turn, he totally defeated the enemy, by his ſuperior valour and conduct, which gained him ſuch an intereſt among the tribes, that he, and his family after him, were regarded as kings; or, to uſe the poet's expreſſion, *the words of power rushed forth from Selma of kings.* —The regal authority, however, except in time of war, was but inconſiderable; for every chief, within his own diſtrict, was abſolute and independent. — From the ſcene of the battle in this epiſode (which was in the valley of Crona, a little to the north of Agricola's wall) I ſhould ſuppoſe that the enemies of the Caledonians were the Romans, or provincial Britons.

came the tribes, to graſſy Colglan-crona. Their chiefs were before them. Each ſtrove to lead the war. Their ſwords were often half-unſheathed. Red rolled their eyes of rage. Separate they ſtood, and hummed their ſurly ſongs. — « Why ſhould they yield to each other? their fathers were equal in war. »

Trenmor was there, with his people, ſtately in youthful locks. He ſaw the advancing foe. The grief of his ſoul aroſe. He bade the chiefs to lead, by turns: they led, but they were rolled away. — From his own moſſy hill, blue-ſhielded Trenmor came down. He led wide-skirted battle, and the ſtrangers failed. Around him the dark-browed warriors came: they ſtruck the ſhield of joy. Like a pleaſant gale, the words of power rushed forth from Selma of kings. But the chiefs led, by turns, in war, till mighty danger roſe: then was the hour of the king to conquer in the field.

« Not unknown, ſaid Cromma-glas (1)

(1) In tradition, this Cromma-glas makes a great figure in that battle which Comhal loſt, together with his life, to the tribe of Morni. I have juſt now, in my hands, an Iriſh compoſition, of a very modern date, as appears from the language, in which all the traditions, concerning that deciſive engagement, are jumbled together. In juſtice to the merit of the poem, I ſhould have here

of shields, are the deeds of our fathers. — But who shall now lead the war, before the race of kings? Miſt ſettles on theſe four dark hills: within it let each warrior ſtrike his shield. Spirits may deſcend in darkneſs, and mark us for the war.» — They went, each to his hill of miſt. Bards marked the ſounds of the shields. Loudeſt rung thy boſs, Duth-maruno. Thou muſt lead in war.

Like the murmur of waters, the race of U-thorno came down. Starno led the battle,

preſented to the reader a tranſlation of it, did not the bard mention ſome circumſtances very ridiculous, and others altogether indecent. Morna, the wife of Comhal, had a principal hand in all the tranſactions previous to the defeat and death of her husband; she, to uſe the words of the bard, *who was the guiding ſtar of the women of Erin.* The bard, it is to be hoped, miſrepreſented the ladies of his country, for Morna's behaviour was, according to him, ſo void of all decency and virtue, that it cannot be ſuppoſed, they had choſen her for their *guiding ſtar.* — The poem conſiſts of many ſtanzas. The language is figurative, and the numbers harmonious; but the piece is ſo full of anachroniſms, and ſo unequal in its compoſition, that the author, moſt undoubtedly, was either mad, or drunk, when he wrote it. — It is worthy of being remarked, that Comhal is, in this poem, very often called, *Comhal na h' Albin*, or *Comhal of Albion*, which ſufficiently demonſtrates, that the allegations of Keating and O Flaherty, concerning *Fion Mac-Comnal*, are but of late invention.

and Swaran of ſtormy iſles. They looked forward from iron shields, like Cruth-loda fiery-eyed, when he looks from behind the darkened moon, and ſtrews his ſigns on night.

The foes met by Turthor's ſtream. They heaved like ridgy waves. Their echoing ſtrokes are mixed. Shadowy death flies over the hoſts. They were clouds of hail, with ſqually winds in their skirts. Their showers are roaring together. Below them ſwells the dark-rolling deep.

Strife of gloomy U-thorno, why should I mark thy wounds? Thou art with the years that are gone; thou fadeſt on my ſoul. Starno brought forward his skirt of war, and Swaran his own dark wing. Nor a harmleſs fire is Duth-maruno's ſword. Lochlin is rolled over her ſtreams. The wrathful kings are folded in thoughts. They roll their ſilent eyes, over the flight of their land.—The horn of Fingal was heard: the ſons of woody Albion returned. But many lay, by Turthor's ſtream, ſilent in their blood.

Chief of Crom-charn, ſaid the king, Duth-maruno, hunter of boars! not harmleſs returns my eagle, from the field of foes. For this white-boſomed Lanul shall brighten, at her ſtreams; Candona shall rejoice, at rocky Crathmo-craulo.

Colgorm (1), replied the chief, was the firſt of my race in Albion; Colgorm, the rider of ocean, thro' its watry vales. He ſlew his brother in I-thorno: he left the land of his fathers. He choſe his place, in ſilence, by rocky Crathmo-craulo. His race came forth, in their years; they came forth to war, but they always fell. The wound of my fathers is mine, king of echoing iſles!

He drew an arrow from his ſide. He fell pale, in a land unknown. His ſoul came forth to his fathers, to their ſtormy iſle. There they purſued boars of miſt, along the skirts of winds.—The chiefs ſtood ſilent around, as the ſtones of Loda, on their hill. The traveller ſees them, thro' the twilight, from his lonely path. He thinks them the ghoſts of the aged, forming future wars.

(1) The family of Duth-maruno, it appears, came originally from Scandinavia, or, at leaſt, from ſome of the northern iſles, ſubject in chief, to the kings of Lochlin. The Highland ſenachies, who never miſſed to make their comments on, and additions to, the works of Oſſian, have given us a long liſt of the anceſtors of Duth-maruno, and a particular account of their actions, many of which are of the marvellous kind. One of the tale-makers of the north has choſen for his hero, Starnmor, the father of Duth-maruno, and, conſidering the adventures thro' which he has led him, the piece is neither diſagreeable, nor abounding with that kind of fiction, which ſhocks credibility.

Night came down, on U-thorno. Still ſtood the chiefs in their grief. The blaſt hiſſed, by turns, thro' every warrior's hair. —Fingal, at length, burſted forth from the thoughts of his ſoul. He called Ullin of harps, and bade the ſong to riſe.—No falling fire, that is only ſeen, and then retires in night; no departing meteor was Crathmocraulo's chief. He was like the ſtrong-beaming ſun, long rejoicing on his hill. Call the names of his fathers, from their dwellings old.

I-thorno (1), ſaid the bard, that riſeſt midſt ridgy ſeas! Why is thy head ſo gloomy, in the ocean's miſt? From thy vales came forth a race, fearleſs as thy ſtrong-wing-

(1) This epiſode is, in the original, extremely beautiful. It is ſet to that wild kind of muſic, which ſome of the Highlanders diſtinguish, by the title of *Fon Oi-marra*, or, the *Song of mermaids*. Some part of the air is abſolutely infernal, but there are many returns in the meaſure, which are inexpreſſibly wild and beautiful. From the genius of the muſic, I ſhould think it came originally from Scandinavia, for the fictions delivered down concerning the *Oi-marra*, (who are reputed the authors of the muſic) exactly correſpond with the notions of the northern nations, concerning their *diræ*, or, *goddeſſes of death*.—Of all the names in this epiſode, there is none of a Galic original, except Strina-dona, which ſignifies, the *ſtrife of heroes*.

ed eagles; the race of Colgorm of iron shields, dwellers of Loda's hall.

In Tormoth's reſounding iſle, aroſe Lurthan, ſtreamy hill. It bent its woody head above a ſilent vale. There, at foamy Cruruth's ſource, dwelt Rurmar, hunter of boars. His daughter was fair as a ſun-beam, white-boſomed Strina-dona!

Many a king of heroes, and hero of iron shields; many a youth of heavy locks came to Rurmar's echoing hall. They came to woo the maid, the ſtately huntreſs of Tormoth wild.—But thou lookeſt careleſs from thy ſteps, high-boſomed Strina-dona!

If on the heath she moved, her breaſt was whiter than the down of Cana (1); if on the ſea-beat shore, than the foam of the rolling ocean. Her eyes were two ſtars of light; her face was heaven's bow in showers; her dark hair flowed round it, like the ſtreaming clouds.—Thou wert the dweller of ſouls, white-handed Strina-dona!

(1) The *Cana* is a certain kind of graſs, which grows plentifully in the heathy moraſſes of the north. Its ſtalk is of the reedy kind, and it carries a tuft of down, very much reſembling cotton. It is exceſſively white, and, conſequently, often introduced by the bards, in their ſimilies concerning the beauty of women.

Colgorm came, in his ship, and Corcul-ſuran, king of ſhells. The brothers came, from I-thorno, to woo the ſun-beam of Tormoth's iſle. She ſaw them in their echoing ſteel. Her ſoul was fixed on blue-eyed Colgorm. — Ul-lochlin's (1) nightly eye looked in, and ſaw the toſſing arms of Strina-dona.

Wrathful the brothers frowned. Their flaming eyes, in ſilence, met. They turned away. They ſtruck their ſhields. Their hands were trembling on their ſwords. They rushed into the ſtrife of heroes, for long-haired Strina-dona.

Corcul-ſuran fell in blood. On his iſle, raged the ſtrength of his father. He turned Colgorm, from I-thorno, to wander on all the winds.— In Crathmo-craulo's rocky field, he dwelt, by a foreign ſtream. Nor darkened the king alone, that beam of light was near, the daughter of echoing Tormoth, white-armed Strina-dona (2).

(1) Ul-lochlin, *the guide to Lochlin;* the name of a ſtar.

(2) The continuation of this epiſode is juſt now in my hands; but the language is ſo different from, and the ideas ſo unworthy of, Oſſian, that I have rejected it, as an interpolation by a modern bard.

CATH-LODA :

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN THIRD.

ARGUMENT.

Oſſian, after ſome general reflections, deſcribes the ſituation of Fingal, and the poſition of the army of Lochlin. — The converſation of Starno and Swaran. — The epiſode of Cormar-trunar and Foinar-bragal. — Starno, from his own example, recommends to Swaran, to ſurprize Fingal, who had retired alone to a neighbouring hill. Upon Swaran's refuſal, Starno undertakes the enterprize himſelf, is overcome, and taken priſoner, by Fingal. — He is diſmiſſed, after a ſevere reprimand for his cruelty.

CATH-LODA:

A

POEM.

DUAN THIRD.

WHENCE is the ſtream of years? Whither do they roll along? Where have they hid, in miſt, their many-coloured ſides? I look into the times of old, but they ſeem dim to Oſſian's eyes, like reflected moon-beams, on a diſtant lake. Here riſe the red beams of war!—There, ſilent, dwells a feeble race! They mark no years with their deeds, as ſlow they paſs along.—Dweller between the ſhields; thou that awakeſt the failing ſoul, deſcend from thy wall, harp of Cona, with thy voices three! Come with that which kindles the paſt: rear the forms of old, on their own dark-brown years!

(1) Uthorno, hill of ſtorms, I behold my

(1) The bards, who were always ready to ſupply what they thought deficient in the poems of Oſſian, have inſerted a great many incidents between the

race on thy ſide. Fingal is bending, in night, over Duth-maruno's tomb. Near him are the ſteps of his heroes, hunters of the boar.— By Turthor's ſtream the hoſt of Lochlin is

ſecond and third *duan* of Cath-loda. Their interpolations are ſo eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the genuine remains of Oſſian, that it took me very little time to mark them out, and totally to reject them. If the modern Scotch and Irish bards have ſhewn any judgment, it is in aſcribing their own compoſitions to names of antiquity, for, by that means, they themſelves have eſcaped that contempt, which the authors of ſuch futile performances muſt, neceſſarily, have met with, from people of true taſte.—— I was led into this obſervation, by an Irish poem, juſt now before me. It concerns a deſcent made by Swaran, king of Lochlin, on Ireland, and is the work, ſays the traditional preface prefixed to it, of *Oſſian Mac-Fion*. It however appears, from ſeveral pious ejaculations, that it was rather the compoſition of ſome good prieſt, in the fifteenth or ſixteenth century, for he ſpeaks, with great devotion, of pilgrimage, and more particularly, of the *blue-eyed daughters of the convent*. Religious, however, as this poet was, he was not altogether decent, in the ſcenes he introduces between Swaran and the wife of *Congcullion*, both of whom he repreſents as giants. It happening unfortunately, that *Congcullion* was only of a moderate ſtature, his wife, without heſitation, preferred Swaran, as a more adequate match for her own gigantic ſize. From this fatal preference proceeded ſo much miſchief, that the good poet altogether loſt ſight of his principal action, and he ends the piece, with an advice to men, in the choice of their wives, which, however good it may be, I ſhall leave concealed in the obſcurity of the original.

deep in shades. The wrathful kings ſtood on two hills; they looked forward from their boſſy shields. They looked forward on the ſtars of night, red-wandering in the weſt. Cruth-loda bends from high, like a formleſs meteor in clouds. He ſends abroad the winds, and marks them, with his ſigns. Starno foreſaw, that Morven's king was never to yield in war.

He twice ſtruck the tree in wrath. He rushed before his ſon. He hummed a ſurly ſong; and heard his hair in wind. Turned (1) from one another, they ſtood, like two oaks, which different winds had bent; each hangs over its own loud rill, and shakes its boughs in the courſe of blaſts.

Annir, ſaid Starno of lakes, was a fire that conſumed of old. He poured death from his eyes, along the ſtriving fields. His joy

(1) The ſurly attitude of Starno and Swaran is well adapted to their fierce and uncomplying diſpoſitions. Their characters, at firſt ſight, ſeem little different; but, upon examination, we find, that the poet has dexterouſly diſtinguiſhed between them. They were both dark, ſtubborn, haughty and reſerved: but Starno was cunning, revengeful, and cruel, to the higheſt degree; the diſpoſition of Swaran, though ſavage, was leſs bloody, and ſomewhat tinctured with generoſity. It is doing injuſtice to Oſſian, to ſay, that he has not a great variety of characters.

was in the fall of men. Blood, to him, was a ſummer ſtream, that brings joy to withered vales, from its own moſſy rock.—He came forth to the lake Luth-cormo, to meet the tall Corman-trunar, he from Urlor of ſtreams, dweller of battle's wing.

The chief of Urlor had come to Gormal, with his dark-boſomed ships; he ſaw the daughter of Annir, white-armed Foinar-bragal. He ſaw her: nor careleſs rolled her eyes, on the rider of ſtormy waves. She fled to his ship in darkneſs, like a moon-beam thro' a nightly vale.—Annir purſued along the deep; he called the winds of heaven.—Nor alone was the king; Starno was by his ſide. Like U-thorno's young eagle, I turned my eyes on my father.

We came to roaring Urlor. With his people came tall Corman-trunar. We fought; but the foe prevailed. In his wrath ſtood Annir of lakes. He lopped the young trees, with his ſword. His eyes rolled red in his rage. I marked the ſoul of the king, and I retired in night.—From the field I took a broken helmet: a shield that was pierced with ſteel: pointleſs was the ſpear in my hand. I went to find the foe.

On a rock ſat tall Corman-trunar, beſide his burning oak; and near him, beneath

a tree, ſat deep-boſomed Foinar-bragal. I threw my broken ſhield before her; and ſpoke the words of peace.—Beſide his rolling ſea, lies Annir of many lakes. The king was pierced in battle; and Starno is to raiſe his tomb. Me, a ſon of Loda, he ſends to white-handed Foinar-bragal, to bid her ſend a lock from her hair, to reſt with her father, in earth.—And thou, king of roaring Urlor, let the battle ceaſe, till Annir receive the ſhell, from fiery-eyed Cruth-loda.

(1) Burſting into tears, she roſe, and tore a lock from her hair; a lock, which wandered, in the blaſt, along her heaving breaſt.—Corman-trunar gave the ſhell; and bade me to rejoice before him.—I reſted in the ſhade of night; and hid my face in my helmet deep.—Sleep deſcended on the foe. I roſe, like a ſtalking ghoſt. I pierced the ſide of Corman-trunar. Nor did Foinar-bragal eſcape. She rolled her white boſom in blood. Why then, daughter of heroes, didſt thou wake my

(1) Oſſian is very partial to the fair ſex. Even the daughter of the cruel Annir, the ſiſter of the revengeful and bloody Starno, partakes not of thoſe diſagreeable characters ſo peculiar to her family. She is altogether tender and delicate. Homer, of all ancient poets, uſes the ſex with leaſt ceremony. His cold contempt is even worſe, than the downright abuſe of the moderns; for to draw abuſe implies the poſſeſſion of ſome merit.

rage?—Morning roſe. The foe were fled, like the departure of miſt. Annir ſtruck his boſſy ſhield. He called his dark-haired ſon. I came, ſtreaked with wandering blood: thrice roſe the ſhout of the king, like the burſting forth of a ſquall of wind, from a cloud, by night.—We rejoiced, three days, above the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They came, from all their winds, to feaſt on Annir's foes.—Swaran!—Fingal is alone (1), on his hill of night. Let thy ſpear pierce the king in ſecret; like Annir, my ſoul ſhall rejoice.

Son of Annir of Gormal, Swaran ſhall not ſlay in ſhades. I move forth in light: the hawks ruſh from all their winds. They are wont to trace my courſe: it is not harmleſs thro' war.

Burning roſe the rage of the king. He thrice raiſed his gleaming ſpear. But ſtarting, he ſpared his ſon; and ruſhed into the night. —By Turthor's ſtream a cave is dark, the

(1) Fingal, according to the cuſtom of the Caledonian kings, had retired to a hill alone, as he himſelf was to reſume the command of the army the next day. Starno might have ſome intelligence of the king's retiring, which occaſions his requeſt to Swaran, to ſtab him; as he foreſaw, by his art of divination, that he could not overcome him in open battle.

dwelling of Conban-carglas. There he laid the helmet of kings, and called the maid of Lulan, but she was diſtant far, in Loda's reſounding hall.

Swelling in his rage, he ſtrode, to where Fingal lay alone. The king was laid on his shield, on his own ſecret hill. — Stern hunter of shaggy boars, no feeble maid is laid before thee: no boy, on his ferny bed, by Turthor's murmuring ſtream. Here is ſpread the couch of the mighty, from which they riſe to deeds of death. Hunter of shaggy boars awaken not the terrible.

Starno came murmuring on. Fingal aroſe in arms. « Who art thou, ſon of night? » Silent he threw the ſpear. They mixed their gloomy ſtrife. The shield of Starno fell, cleft in twain. He is bound to an oak. The early beam aroſe. — Then Fingal beheld the king of Gormal. He rolled a while his ſilent eyes. He thought of other days, when white-boſomed Agandecca moved like the muſic of ſongs. — He looſed the thong from his hands. — Son of Annir, he ſaid, retire. Retire to Gormal of shells: a beam that was ſet returns. I remember thy white-boſomed daughter; — dreadful king away! — Go to thy troubled dwelling, cloudy foe of the lovely! Let the ſtranger shun thee, thou gloomy in the hall!

A tale of the times of old!

OINA-MORUL:

A

POEM.

ARGUMENT.

After an addreſs to Malvina, the daughter of Toſcar, Oſſian proceeds to relate his own expedition to Fuarfed, an iſland of Scandinavia. — Mal-orchol, king of Fuarfed, being hard preſſed in war, by Ton-thormod, chief of Sar-dronlo, (who had demanded, in vain, the daughter of Mal-orchol in marriage) Fingal ſent Oſſian to his aid. —— Oſſian, on the day after his arrival, came to battle with Ton-thormod, and took him priſoner. — Mal-orchol offers his daughter Oina-morul to Oſſian; but he, diſcovering her paſſion for Ton-thormod, generouſly ſurrenders her to her lover, and brings about a reconciliation between the two kings.

OINA-MORUL:

A

A POEM.

As flies the unconſtant ſun, over Larmon's graſſy hill; ſo paſs the tales of old, along my ſoul, by night. When bards are removed to their place; when harps are hung in Selma's hall; then comes a voice to Oſſian, and awakes his ſoul. It is the voice of years that are gone: they roll before me, with all their deeds. I ſeize the tales, as they paſs, and pour them forth in ſong. Nor a troubled ſtream is the ſong of the king, it is like the riſing of muſic from Lutha of the ſtrings.—Lutha of many ſtrings, not ſilent are thy ſtreamy rocks, when the white hands of Malvina move upon the harp.—Light of the ſhadowy thoughts, that fly acroſs my ſoul, daughter of Toſcar of helmets, wilt thou not hear the ſong! We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away.

It was in the days of the king, (1) while yet my locks were young, that I marked Con-cathlin (2), on high, from ocean's night-

(1) Fingal.

(2) Con-cathlin, *mild beam of the wave.* What

ly wave. My courſe was towards the iſle of Fuarfed, woody dweller of ſeas. Fingal had ſent me to the aid of Mal-orchol, king of Fuarfed wild: for war was around him, and our fathers had met, at the feaſt.

In Col-coiled, I bound my ſails, and ſent my ſword to Mal-orchol of shells. He knew the ſignal of Albion, and his joy aroſe. He came from his own high hall, and ſeized my hand in grief «Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king? Ton-thormod of many ſpears is the chief of wavy Sar-dronlo. He ſaw and loved my daughter, white-boſomed Oina-mórul. He ſought; I denied the maid; for our fathers had been foes. — He came,

ſtar was ſo called of old is not eaſily aſcertained. Some now diſtinguish the pole-ſtar by that name. A ſong, which is ſtill in repute, among the ſea-faring part of the Highlanders, alludes to this paſſage of Oſſian. The author commends the knowledge of Oſſian in ſea affairs, a merit, which, perhaps, few of us moderns will allow him, or any in the age in which he lived. — One thing is certain, that the Caledonians often made their way thro' the dangerous and tempeſtuous ſeas of Scandinavia; which is more, perhaps, than the more polished nations, ſubſiſting in thoſe times, dared to venture. — In eſtimating the degree of knowledge of arts among the antients, we ought not to bring it into compariſon with the improvements of modern times. Our advantages over them proceed more from accident, than any merit of ours.

with battle, to Fuarfed. My people are rolled away. — Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king?»

I come not, I ſaid, to look, like a boy, on the ſtrife. Fingal remembers Mal-orchol, and his hall for ſtrangers. From his waves, the warrior deſcended, on thy woody iſle. Thou wert no cloud before him. Thy feaſt was ſpread with ſongs. For this, my ſword ſhall riſe; and thy foes perhaps may fail. — Our friends are not forgot in their danger, tho' diſtant is our land.

Son of the daring Trenmor, thy words are like the voice of Cruth-loda, when he ſpeaks, from his parting cloud, ſtrong dweller of the ſky! Many have rejoiced at my feaſt; but they all have forgot Mal-orchol. I have looked towards all the winds, but no white ſails were ſeen. — But ſteel (1) reſounds

(1) There is a ſevere ſatire couched in this expreſſion, againſt the gueſts of Mal-orchol. Had his feaſt been ſtill ſpread, had joy continued in his hall, his former paraſites would not have failed to reſort to him. But as the time of feſtivity was paſt, their attendance alſo ceaſed. The ſentiments of a certain old bard are agreeable to this obſervation. He, poetically, compares a great man to a fire kindled in a deſart place. « Thoſe that pay court to him, ſays he, are rolling large around him, like the ſmoke about the fire. This ſmoke gives the fire a great appearance at a diſtance, but it is but an

in my hall, and not the joyful shells.—Come to my dwelling, race of heroes; dark-skirted night is near. Hear the voice of ſongs, from the maid of Fuarfed wild.

We went. On the harp aroſe the white hands of Oina-morul. She waked her own ſad tale, from every trembling ſtring. I ſtood in ſilence; for bright in her locks was the daughter of many iſles. Her eyes were like two ſtars, looking forward thro' a rushing ſhower. The mariner marks them on high, and bleſſes the lovely beams. —With morning we rushed to battle, to Tormul's reſounding ſtream: the foe moved to the ſound of Ton-thormod's boſſy shield. From wing to wing the ſtrife was mixed. I met the chief of Sar-dronlo. Wide flew his broken ſteel. I ſeized the king in fight. I gave his hand, bound faſt with thongs, to Mal-orchol, the giver of sheils. Joy roſe at the feaſt of Fuarfed, for the foe had failed. —Ton-thormod

empty vapour itſelf, and varying its form at every breeze. When the trunk, which fed the fire, is conſumed, the ſmoke departs on all the winds. So the flatterers forſake their chief, when his power declines. » I have choſen to give a paraphraſe, rather than a tranſlation, of this paſſage, as the original is verboſe and frothy, notwithſtanding of the ſentimental merit of the author. —— He was one of the leſs antient bards, and their compoſitions are not nervous enough to bear a literal tranſlation.

turned his face away, from Oina-morul of iſles.

Son of Fingal, begun Mal-orchol, not forgot ſhalt thou paſs from me. A light ſhall dwell in thy ſhip. Oina-morul of ſlow-rolling eyes. She ſhall kindle gladneſs, along thy mighty ſoul. Nor unheeded ſhall the maid move in Selma, thro' the dwelling of kings.

In the hall I lay in night. Mine eyes were half cloſed in ſleep Soft muſic came to mine ear: it was like the riſing breeze, that whirls, at firſt, the thiſtle's beard; then flies, dark-ſhadowy, over the graſs. It was the maid of Fuarfed wild: ſhe raiſed the nightly ſong; for ſhe knew that my ſoul was a ſtream, that flowed at pleaſant ſounds.

Who looks, ſhe ſaid, from his rock, on ocean's cloſing miſt? His long locks, like the raven's wing, are wandering on the blaſt. Stately are his ſteps in grief. The tear are in his eyes. His manly breaſt is heaving over his burſting ſoul.—Retire, I am diſtant far; a wanderer in lands unknown. Tho' the race of kings are around me, yet my ſoul is dark.—Why have our fathers been foes, Ton-thormod love of maids!

Soft voice of the ſtreamy iſle, why doſt thou mourn by night? the race of daring

Trenmor are not the dark in ſoul. Thou ſhalt not wander, by ſtreams unknown, blue-eyed Oina-morul.—Within this boſom is a voice; it comes not to other ears: it bids Oſſian hear the hapleſs, in their hour of woe. —Retire, ſoft ſinger by night; Ton-thormod ſhall not mourn on his rock.

With morning I looſed the king. I gave the long-haired maid. Mal-orchol heard my words, in the midſt of his echoing halls. —«King of Fuarfed wild, why ſhould Ton-thormod mourn? He is of the race of heroes, and a flame in war. Your fathers have been foes, but now their dim ghoſts rejoice in death. They ſtretch their arms of miſt to the ſame ſhell in Loda. Forget their rage, ye warriors, it was the cloud of other years.»—

Such were the deeds of Oſſian, while yet his locks were young: tho' lovelineſs, with a robe of beams, clothed the daughter of many iſles.—We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away!

COLNA-DONA:

A

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal dispatches Ossian and Toscar to raise a stone, on the banks of the stream of Crona, to perpetuate the memory of a victory, which he had obtained in that place. When they were employed in that work, Car-ul, a neighbouring chief, invited them to a feast. — They went: and Toscar fell desperately in love with Colna-dona, the daughter of Car-ul. Colna-dona became no less enamoured of Toscar. An incident, at a hunting-party, brings their loves to a happy issue.

COLNA-DONA:

A

A POEM.

(1) COL-AMON of troubled ſtreams, dark wanderer of diſtant vales, I behold thy courſe, between trees, near Car-ul's echoing halls. There dwelt bright Colna-dona, the daughter of the king. Her eyes were rolling ſtars; her arms were white as the foam of ſtreams. Her breaſt roſe ſlowly to ſight, like ocean's heaving wave. Her ſoul was a ſtream of light.—Who, among the maids, was like the love of heroes?

Beneath the voice of the king, we moved

(1) Colna-dona ſignifies *the love of heroes.* Col-amon, *narrow river.* Car-ul, *dark-eyed.* Col-amon, the reſidence of Car-ul, was in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, towards the ſouth. Car-ul ſeems to have been of the race of thoſe Britons, who are diſtinguiſhed by the name of Maiatæ, by the writers of Rome. Maiatæ is derived from two Galic words, MOI, *a plain*, and AITIGH, *inhabitants*; ſo that the ſignification of Maiatæ is, *the inhabitants of the plain country*; a name given to the Britons, who were ſettled in the Low-lands, in contradiſtinction to the Caledonians, (i. e. CAEL-DON, *the Gauls of the hills*) who were poſſeſſed of the more mountainous diviſion of North-Britain.

to Crona (1) of the ſtreams, Toſcar of graſſy Lutha, and Oſſian, young in fields. Three bards attended with ſongs. Three boſſy ſhields were born before us: for we were to rear the ſtone, in memory of the paſt. By Crona's moſſy courſe, Fingal had ſcattered his foes: he had rolled away the ſtrangers, like a troubled ſea. We came to the place of renown: from the mountains deſcended night. I tore an oak from its hill, and raiſed a flame on high. I bade my fathers to look down, from the clouds of their hall; for, at the fame of their race, they brighten in the wind.

I took a ſtone from the ſtream, amidſt the ſong of bards. The blood of Fingal's foes hung curdled in its ooze. Beneath, I placed, at intervals, three boſſes from the ſhields of

(1) Crona, *murmuring*, was the name of a ſmall ſtream, which diſcharged itſelf in the river Carron. It is often mentioned by Oſſian, and the ſcenes of many of his poems are on its banks. ——The enemies, whom Fingal defeated here, are not mentioned. They were, probably, the provincial Britons. That tract of country between the Firths of Forth and Clyde has been, thro' all antiquity, famous for battles and rencounters, between the different nations, who were poſſeſſed of North and South Britain. Stirling, a town ſituated there, derives its name from that very circumſtance. It is a corruption of the Galic name, STRILA, i. e. *the hill, or rock, of contention.*

foes, as roſe or fell the ſound of Ullin's nightly ſong. Toſcar laid a dagger in earth, a mail of ſounding ſteel. We raiſed the mould around the ſtone, and bade it ſpeak to other years.

Oozy daughter of ſtreams, that now art reared on high, ſpeak to the feeble, O ſtone, after Selma's race have failed! — Prone, from the ſtormy night, the traveller ſhall lay him, by thy ſide: thy whiſtling moſs ſhall ſound in his dreams; the years that were paſt ſhall return. — Battles riſe before him, blue-ſhielded kings deſcend to war: the darkened moon looks from heaven, on the troubled field. — He ſhall burſt, with morning, from dreams, and ſee the tombs of warriors round. He ſhall ask about the ſtone, and the aged will reply, « This grey ſtone was raiſed by Oſſian, a chief of other years! »

(1) From Col-amon came a bard, from

(1) The manners of the Britons and Caledonians were ſo ſimilar, in the days of Oſſian, that there can be no doubt, that they were originally the ſame people, and deſcended from thoſe Gauls who firſt poſſeſſed themſelves of South-Britain, and gradually migrated to the north. This hypotheſis is more rational than the idle fables of ill-informed ſenachies, who bring the Caledonians from diſtant countries. The bare opinion of Tacitus, (which, by the bye, was only founded on a ſimilarity of the perſonal figure of the Caledonians to the Ger-

Car-ul, the friend of ſtrangers. He bade us to the feaſt of kings, to the dwelling of bright Colna-dona. We went to the hall of harps. There Car-ul brightened between his aged locks, when he beheld the ſons of his friends, like two young trees with their leaves.

Sons of the mighty, he ſaid, ye bring back the days of old, when firſt I deſcended from waves, on Selma's ſtreamy vale. I purſued Duth-mocarglos, dweller of ocean's wind. Our fathers had been foes, we met by Clutha's winding waters. He fled, along the ſea, and my ſails were ſpread behind him.—Night deceived me, on the deep. I came to the dwelling of kings, to Selma of high-boſomed maids. — Fingal came forth with his bards, and Conloch, arm of death. I feaſted three days in the hall, and ſaw the blue-eyes of Erin, Ros-crana, daughter of heroes, light of Cormac's race.—Nor forgot did my ſteps depart: the kings gave their ſhields to

mans of his own time) tho' it has ſtaggered ſome learned men, is not ſufficient to make us believe, that the antient inhabitants of North-Britain were a German colony. A diſcuſſion of a point like this might be curious, but could never be ſatisfactory. Periods ſo diſtant are ſo involved in obſcurity, that nothing certain can be now advanced concerning them. The light which the Roman writers hold forth is too feeble to guide us to the truth, thro' the darkneſs which has ſurrounded it.

Car-ul:

Ca-rul: they hang, on high, in Col-amon in memory of the paſt.—Sons of the daring kings, ye bring back the days of old.

Ca-rul placed the oak of feaſts. He took two boſſes from our ſhields. He laid them in earth, beneath a ſtone, to ſpeak to the hero's race. «When battle, ſaid the king, ſhall roar, and our ſons are to meet in wrath; my race ſhall look, perhaps, on this ſtone, when they prepare the ſpear.—Have not our fathers met in peace, they will ſay, aſide the ſhield?»

Night came down. In her long locks moved the daughter of Ca-rul. Mixed with the harp aroſe the voice of white armed Colna-dona. —Toſcar darkened in his place, before the love of heroes. She came on his troubled ſoul, like a beam to the dark-heaving ocean: when it burſts from a cloud, and brightens the foamy ſide of a wave (1).

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With morning we awaked the woods; and hung forward on the path of the roes. They fell by their wonted ſtreams. We return-

(1) Here an epiſode is intirely loſt; or, at leaſt, is handed down ſo imperfectly, that it does not deſerve a place in the poem.

ed thro' Crona's vale. From the wood a youth came forward, with a shield and pointleſs ſpear. « Whence, ſaid Toſcar of Lutha, is the flying beam? Dwells there peace at Col-amon, round bright Colna-dona of harps? »

By Col-amon of ſtreams, ſaid the youth, bright Colna-dona dwelt. She dwelt; but her courſe is now in deſarts, with the king; he that ſeized her ſoul as it wandered thro' the hall.

Stranger of tales, ſaid Toſcar, haſt thou marked the warrior's courſe? He muſt fall,—give thou that boſſy shield!—In wrath he took the shield. Fair behind it heaved the breaſts of a maid, white as the boſom of a ſwan, riſing on ſwift-rolling waves. It was Colna dona of harps, the daughter of the king.—Her blue eyes had rolled on Toſcar, and her love aroſe.

A SPECIMEN OF THE ORIGINAL OF TEMORA.

BOOK SEVENTH.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is thought proper to give a ſpecimen of the original Galic, for the ſatisfaction of thoſe who doubt the authenticity of Oſſian's poems. The ſeventh book of TEMORA is fixed on, for that purpoſe, not from any other ſuperior merit, than the variety of its verſification. To print any part of the former collection was unneceſſary, as a copy of the originals lay, for many months, in the bookſeller's hands, for the inſpection of the curious. Tho' the erroneous orthography of the bards is departed from, in many inſtances, in the following ſpecimen, yet ſeveral quieſcent conſonants are retained, to ſhew the derivation of the words. This circumſtance may give an uncouth appearance

to the language, in the eyes of thoſe who are ſtrangers to its harmony. They ought, however, to conſider, that a language is put to the ſevereſt teſt, when it is ſtripped of its own proper characters; eſpecially, when the power of *one* of them requires, ſometimes, a combination of two or three Roman letters to expreſs it.

A SPECIMEN OF THE ORIGINAL OF TEMORA.

BOOK SEVENTH.

O Linna doir-choille na *Leigo*,
Air uair, eri' ceo taobh-ghórm nan tón;
Nuair dhunas dorſa na h'oicha
Air iulluir-ſhuil greina nan ſpeur.
Tomhail, mo *Lara* nan ſruth,
Thaomas du'-nial, as doricha cruaim:
Mar ghlas-ſcia', roi taoma nan nial,
Snamh ſeachad, ta Gellach na h'oicha.
Le ſo edi' taiſin o-ſhean
An dlu'-ghleus, a meaſc na gaoith,
'S iad leamnach, o oſna gu oſna,
Air du'-aghai' oicha nan ſian.
An taobh oitaig, gu palin nan ſeoid,

Taomas iad ceach nan ſpeur,
Gorm-thalla do thannais nach béo,
Gu ám eri' fón marbh-rán nan teud.

Ta torman, a machair nan crán
Se *Conar* ri *Erin* at' án,
A taoma' ceo-tanais gu dlu'
Air *Faolan* aig *Lubhair* nan ſru'
Muladach, ſuigha fo bhrón,
Dh'aom an tais an ceach an loin.
Thaom oſna, eſſin an fein,
Ach phil an cruth aluin, gu dian
Phíl é le chrom-shealla mál
Le cheo-leatain, mar shuibhal nan ſian.
'S doilleir ſo!
Ata na ſloigh na nſuain, ſan ám,
An truſcan ceat na h'oicha:
Dh' ilſich teina an ri, gu ard,
Dh' aom é na aonar, air ſcia'.
Thuit codál, mo shuillin a ghaiſcich,
Thanic guth *Fhaolan*, na chluais.

An codal ſo, don' fhear-phoſda aig *Clatho*?
Am bail coni do m'athair, an ſuain?
Am bail cuina, s' mi 'ntruſcan nan nial?
'S mi m' aonar an ám na h'oicha?

Cur ſon ta ú, a m' aſlin fein?
Thubhart *Fion-ghael*, 's é'g eri grad.

An dith-chuin, d'omſe, mo mhac,
Na shiubhal teina air Rethlan nan laoich?
Ni marſin, air anam an ri,
Thig gniomh ſeoid aluin na ncruai'-bheum.
Ni ndeallan iadſe, a theichas an dubhra
Na h'oicha, 'snach fhág a lorg.
'S cuina liom *Faolan* na shuain:
'Ta m'anam aig eri' borb.

Ghluais an ri, le ſleagh, gu grad,
Bhuail e nſcia' as fuaimnach cop,
An ſcia' a dh' aom ſa n'oicha ard,
Bal-moſgla' do cháth nan lót.
Air aomagh du' nan ſliabh,
Air gaoith, theich treud nan tais:
O ghleanan cear nan ioma lúp,
'Mhoſguil guth a bhais.

Bhuail é 'n ſcia, an darra cuairt,
Ghluais coga, an aſlin an t'shluaigh:
Bhith comh-ſri nan lán glas —
A dcalra' air anam nan ſeoid,
Cian-ſ heona a truita' gu cath,
Slua' a teicha, — gniomh bu chruai',
Leth-dhoilleir, an deallan na ſtalin.

Nuair dh' erich, an darra fuaim,
Leum feigh, o chós nan cárn
Chluinte a ſcreadan ſcé', ſa n' fhaſich —

Gach Ean, air oſna fein.
Leth-erich ſiol *Albin* nam buaigh
Thog iad ſuas gach ſleagh, bu ghlas:
Ach phíl ſachir, air an l' shluaigh,
Se bh' án ſcia' *Mhorbhein* na mfras,
Phíl codal, air ſuilin na mfear:
Bu dorcha, tróm a nglean.

Ni mo chodal, duitſe é, ſa nuair,
Nion shuil-ghórm *Chonmor* na mbuaigh, —
Chuala *Suil-mhalla* an fhuaim
Dh' erich i, ſa n' oicha, le cruaim:
Ta ceum gu ti *Atha* na ncolg:
Ni moſguil cunart anam borb.
Tróm a shéſi, —— a ſuilin ſios.
Ta 'nſpeur an loſga nan reul.

Chualas lé ſciath na ncòp.
Ghluais; — ghrad shés an Oi: —
Dh' erich a gu' — ach dh' aom é ſios. —
Chuinic ís é, na ſtalin chruai,
A dealra ti loſga nan reul:
Chuinic ís é, na leatan thróm.
Aig eri ri oſna nan ſpeur.
Thionta i ceamna, le fiamh,
Curſon dhuiſgimſe Ri *Erin* na m *Bólg*,
Ni n' aſlin do chodal u-fein,
A nion *Inis-uina* na ncólg.

Gu garg a mhoſgul an torman;

On' oi thuit a ccan-bhért ſios:
Ta mforum, air carric nan ſruth.
Plaoſga, o aſlin na h'oicha,
Ghluais *Cathmor* fa' chrán fein.
Chuinic é n' Oi bu tla,
Air carric *Lubhair* nan ſliabh:
Dearg reul, a ſealla ſios, —
Meaſc ſiubhal a tróm chíabh.

Cia 'ta roi Oicha gu *Cathmor*
An ceat-amſair aſlin fein?
Am bail ſios duit, air ſri na ncruai-bheum?
Cia uſſa, mhic dubhra nan ſpeur?
Na shés u, am ſion as an Ri,
Do chaol-thannais, on n' am o-shean;
Na nguth u, o neoil nam fras,
Le cunairt *Erin* na ncolg ſean?

Mi mfear ſiubhail dubhra mi-fhein,
Ni nguth mi, o neol, na cruaim:
Ach ta m' fhocul, le cunairt na h' *Erin*.
An cualas duit coppan na fuaim?
Ni ntais é, Ri *Atha* nan ſruth,
A thaomas an fhuaim air oicha.

Taomagh an ſeod a ghuth fein,
'S ſon clarſich, do *Chathmor* an fhuaim;
Ta aitis, mhic dubhra nan ſpeur,
Loſga air m' anam, gun ghruaim

Se ceoil chiean-fheona na ncruai-bheum,
A m' oicha, air aſri nan ſian,
Nuair laſas anam nan ſón;
A chlán an cruadal do mian.
Ta ſiol-meata a nconi, na mſiamh,
A ngleanan na n' oſna tlá,
Far an aom ceo-maidin, ri ſliabh,
O ghorm-shuibhal ſruthan na mblár.

Ni meata, chean-uia nan ſón,
An ſeans'ra', on thuit mi-fein,
Bu choni doigh dubhra nan tón,
An tir fhadda ſiol cholgach na mbeum.
Ach ni nſolas do m' anam tlá
Fuaim mhál a bhais on raoin,
Thig eſſin nach geil gu bráth;
Moſguil bard focuil a ſcaoin. —

Mar charric, s' ſruthan ri taobh,
'M faſich na mfaoin bheau,
Shes *Cathmor*, cean-ſcona nach maoin, —
An deoir ——
Mar oitag, air anam le brón,
Thanic guth caoin na h'oi,
Moſgla cuina talamh nan bean
A caomh-choni aig ſruthan na nglean;
Roi n' ám an d' thanic é gu borb
Gu cabhar *Chonmor* na ncolg fiar.

A nion coigrich nan lán,

(Thionta i cean on d' shón)
'S fadda fa, m' shuil, an cruai,
Cran flathal *Inis-uina* nan tón.
Ta m' anam, do thubhairt mi-fein,
An truſcan nan ſian cear,
Car ſon a laſſa an dealra ſo-f hein,
Gus am pil mi, an sí', on d' shliabh?

Na ghlas m' aighai', na t' fhionas, a lamh-gheal,
'S tu togmhail do m' eagal an Ri?
'Sám cunairt, annir nan tróm chiabh,
Am do m' anam, mór-thalla na ſri!
Attas e, tomhail mar ſruth,
A taomagh air *Cael* na ncruaí-bheum.

An taobh carric choſach, air *Lona*,
Mo chaochan, nan ſruthan cróm,
Glas, a nciabh na h' aoſe,
'Ta *Claon-mhal*, Ri clarſich nam ſón.
O s' cion ta cran-darrach na mſuaim,
Agus ſiubhal nan rua-bhoc ſliom,
'Ta forum na ſri' na chluais
'S é 'g aomagh à nſmuina nach tiom.
An ſin bith do thalla, *Shul mhalla*,
Gus an illſich forum na mbeum:
Gus ám píl mi, an laſſa na cruai',
O thruſcan dubhra na bein:
On cheach do thruſſas o *Lona*
Ma choni mo ruin fein.

Thuit gath-ſoluis air anam na h'oi,
Las i ſuas, fa' choir an Ri:
Thionta i á h' aighai ri *Cathmor*,
A ciabh-bhóg ans' na h' oſna á ſri?

Reupar iulluir nan ſpeür árd,
O mhór-ſrúth gaoith na nglean;
Nuair chi' é na ruai-bhuic, fa' choir;
Clán elid na mfaoin bhean,
Mu ntionta *Cathmor* na ncruai-bheum;
On d' ſrí mu n' erich dán. —
Faicimſe u, ghasgaich na ngeur lán,
O thruſcan an dubhra dú,
Nuair thogas ceo mu m' choni fein;
Air *Lona* na n' ioma ſrú'?
Nuair 's fadda, o m' ſhuil, u sheoid!
Puail coppan na mfuaim árd.
Pillé ſolas, do m' anam, 's é neeo
'S mi aig aoma air carric liom fein.
Ach mo thuit u — mar ri coigrich ata mí!
Thigga' do ghuth o neoil,
Gu oi *Inis-uina*, 's fán.

Og-gheug *Lumcin* an fheur,
Com dh' aoma tu, 'nſtrachda nan ſian?
'S tric thionta *Cathmor* ó nbhlár
Du'-thaomagh air aighai' nan ſliabh.
Mar mhellain, do m' fein, ta ſleagh nan lót;
'S iad prunagh air cós nan ſciath;

Dh' erim, mo sholluis, on d' shrí;
Mar thein-oicha, o thaoma nan nial
Na píl, a dheo-ghreina, on ghlean
Nuair dhluthichas forum na ncolg:
Eagal teachá do nabhad o m'lamh,
Mar theich iad, o shiean' sra' na m *Bólg*.

Chualas le *Sónmor* air *Cluanar*,
Thuit sa *Chormac* na ngeúr lán,
Tri lo dhorch an Ri,
Mu n' fhear, a gh' aom an sri na glean.
Chuinac min-bhean, an són á nceo.
Phrosnich sud d' i siubhal gu sliabh,
Thog i bogha, fos n'iosal,
Gu dol marri laoch nan sciath.
Do n' ainir luigh dubhra air *Atha*,
Nuair shuilagh á ngaisgach gu gniomh.

O cheud sruthan aonach na h'oicha;
Thaom siol *Alnecma* sios.
Chualas scia' chasmachd an Ri,
Mhosguil a n' anam gu sri'
Bha' an siubhal, a mforum nan lán;
Gu *Ullin*, talamh na ncrán.
Bhuail *Sónmór*, air uari', an sciath
Cean-feona na mborb thriath.
Na ndeabh, lean *Sul-allin*
Air aoma na mfras,
Bu sholus ís, air aonach,
Nuair thaom iad air gleanta glas.

Ta ceamna flathail air lóm,
Nuair thog iad, ri aghai nan tóm.
B' eagal d' i ſealla an Ri——
Dh' fhág i, 'n *Atha* na mfri'.

Nuair dh' erich forum na mbeum;
Agus thaom iad, ſa cheille, ſa chath,
Loiſg *Sonmor*, mar theina nan ſpeur,
Thanic *Sul-aluin* na mflath.
A folt ſcaoilta, ſa n' oſna,
A h' anam aig oſparn mon' Ri.
Dh' aom é an t' shri' mu rún nan laoich;
Theich nabhad fa' dhubhra nan ſpeur
Luigh *Cluanar* gun fhuil,
Gun fhuil, air tigh caoil gun leus.——

Ni n' d' erich fearg *Shon-mhor* nan lán,
Bha' lo gu dorcha, 's gu mál:
Ghluais *Sul-allin* mu gorm-ſtru' fein,
A ſuil an reachda nan deuir.
Bu lionmhar a ſealla, gu caoin
Air gaiſgach ſabhach nach faoin.
Ach thionta i a ſuillin tla,
O shea'la, an laoch thuatal.
Mhoſgul blair, mar fhorum nan nial;
Ghluais doran o anam mór,
Chunas a ceamna, le aitis,
'Sa lamh-gheal air clarſich na mfón.

Na chruai a ghluais an Ri, gun dail;

Bhuail é 'n ſciath choſach árd;
Gu árd, air darach nan ſian,
Aig *Lubhair* na n' ioma ſruth.
Seachd coppain a bh', air an ſcé,
Seachd focuil an Ri' do shluagh;
A thaomagh air oſna nan ſpeur,
Air finachá mór na m *Bólg*.

Air gach copan ta reül do n'oicha;
Cean-mathon nan ros gun ſcleo',
Caol-derna, o neoil aig eri',
Ul-oicho an truſcan do cheo.
'Ta *Caon-cathlin*, air carric, a dealra
Reül-dura' ar gorm-thón on iar:
Leth-chellagh ſolus an uiſce.
Ta *Ber-thein*, las-shuil nan ſliabh,
Scalla ſios, o choille ſa n'aonach;
Air mál shiúbhal, sélgair 's é trial,
Roi ghleanan, an dubhra bhraonach,
Le faogh rua-bhuic nan leum árd.

Tomhail, a mian na ſcé,
'Ta laſſa *Ton-theina*, gun neoil,
An rinnac a sheal, roi n'oicha,
Air *Lear-thon* a chuain mhoir;
Lear-thon, cean-feona na m *Bolg*
A nceud-fhear á shuibhail air gaoith.

Leathain ſcaoile ſeoil bhán an Ri.

Gu *Inis-fail* nan ioma ſru?
Thaom oicha air aighai' a chuain,
Agus ceach nan truſcan du'.
Pha' gaoith a caochla dlu' ſa nſpeur.
Leum loingheas, o thòn gu tón;
Nuair dh' erich *Ton-theina* nan ſtuagh
Caon-shealla, o bhriſta' nan nial,
B' aitis do *Learthon* tein-uil ná mbuaigh,
A dealra air domhan nan ſian.

Fa' ſleagh *Chathmor* na ncolg ſean
Dhuiſge an guth, a dhuiſga Baird.
Thaom iad du', o thaobh nan ſliabh,
Le clarſich ghrin 's gach lamh.
Le aitis mór, shés rompa an Ri,
Mar f'hear-ſiubhal, ri teas la 'nglean.
Nuair chluinas é, fadda ſa nréth,
Caoin thorman ſruthan na mbean:
Sruthan a bhriſtas ſa n' f'haſich,
C chartic thaobh-ghlas nan rua-bhoc.

Cur ſon chluinim guth ard an Ri—
N' ám codal, a n' oicha nan fras
Am facas tanais nach beo,
Meaſc t'aſlin aig aoma glas?
Air neoil am bail an aitach fuar,
Feaghai' tón *Fhonair* na mfleagh?
'S lionmhar an ſiubhal air réth,
Far an tog an ſiol an t' shleagh.

Na n' erich, ar cronan air thús,
Mu n' fhear, nach tog on t' shlea' gu brath;
Fear choſcairt, air glean nan ſloigh,
O *Mhoma* nan ioma bad?

Ni dith-chuin do m' dorcha na mblár
Chean-fheona na mbard, o thús,
Togar cloch do aig *Lubhair* na ncárn,
Ait-coni dh' *Fholdath* 'sdo chliu.
Ach taom m'anam, air ám nan laoich,
Air na bliaghna', ſo n d' erich iad ſuas,
Air tón *Inis-uina* na ncolg.
Ni n' aitis, do *Chathmor* a bhain,
Cuina *Lumon* inis uina na nſloi?
Lumon talamh na nſruth,
Caon-choni na mbán-bhroilach Oi.

Lumon na ſruth!
'Ta u dealra, air m' anam fein;
'Ta do ghrian, air do thaobh,
Air carric na ncrán bu tróm.

Tat' elid chear
Do dhearg bar-mhor, a meaſc na mbad
A faicin air ſliabh.
An colg-chu, a ſiubhal grad.
Màl air an réth
Ta ceamna nan Oi:
Oi lamh-gheal nan teud

'S na bogha cróm, ſa mhoi;
Togmhail an gorm-shuil tlá,
On leatain bhar-bhui, air ſliabh na mflath.
Ni bail ceamna *Lear-thon* ſa bhein,
Cean *Inis* na ngeug *uina*.

Ta ê togmhail du-dharach air tón
A ncamis *Chluba*, nan ioma ſtua',
An du-dharach, bhuain é o *Lumon*,
Gu ſiubhal air aighai à chuain.
Thionta Oi an ſuillin tlá,
On Ri, mo ntuitagh é ſios.
Ni mfacas leo riamh an long,
Cear mharcach a chuain mhoir.

Ghlaoi' anois, an Ri a ghaoith.
Meaſc ceó na marra glais.
Dh' erich *Inis-fail* gu gorm:
Thuit, gu dian, oicha na mfraiſ.
Bhuail eagal *Clan-Bholga* gu lua'
Ghlan neoil, o *Thon-theina* nan ſtua'
A ncamis *Chulbin* dh' atich an long
Far am fregra' coille do thón.
Bu chopach an ſin an ſru'
O charric *Duth-umha* na ncós,
'San dealra tannais nach beo
Le ncruith caochlach fein.

Thanic aſlin gu *Lear-thon* nan long,

Seachd Samla do nlina nach beo,
Chualas a nguth briſta, tróm:
Chunas an ſiol an ceo.
Chunas ſiol *Atha* no ncolg —
'San clán cean-uia' na m *Bolg*.
Thaom iad a mfeachda' fein,
Mar cheach a terna on bhein,
Nuair shiubhlas é glas, fa' oſna,
Air *Atha* nan ioma dos.

Thog *Lear-thon* talla *Shamla*,
Ri caoin fhón clarſich nan teud.
Dh' aom eilid *Erin*, o cheamna
Aig aiſra' glas nan ſruth.
Nin dith-chuin do *Lumon* uina,
Na *Flathal*, gheal-lamhach na mbua'gh
'S í comhaid, air marcach nan tón
O Thulach nan eilid ruagh.

Lumon na ſruth
Ta ú dealra' air m' anam fein!

Mhoſguil gath ſoluis on ear,
Dh' erich árd-chean cheaich na bein.
Chunas air cladach ngleanan
A ncróm chaochan ghlas-ſruthach fein.
Chualas ſciath *Chathmor* na ncolg,
Mhoſguil ſiol *Erin* na m *Bolg*.
Mar mhuir dhomhail, nuair ghluiſas gu geur

Fuaim aitti, air aghai' nan ſpeur:
Taoma tuin, o thaobh gu taobh,
Aig aomagh a nglas chiean bao;
Gun eolas, air ſiubhal a chuain.

Trom is mál, gu *Lon* na ſruth
Ghluais *Suil-mhalla* nan roſc tlá;
Ghluais as thionta n' Oi le brón:
A gorm-shuil fa shilla blá.
Nuair thanic i gu carric chruai'
Du chromagh air gleanan an *Lón*
Sheal i, o briſtagh a ceil,
Air Ri *Atha* —— dh' aom i ſios.

Puail teud, a mhic Alpain na mſón;
Ambail ſolas a nclarſich na nieo
Taom air *Oſſian*, agus Oſſun gu tróm;
Ta anam a ſnamh a nceo.

Chualas u, Bhaird, a m' oicha
Ach ſiubhla fón edrom uam fein!
'S aitis caoin thurra do dh' *Oſſan*
A mbliaghna chear na h' aöiſe.

Dhreun uaina thulloch nan tais
A thaomas do chean air gaoith oicha;
Ni bail t' fhorum na mchluais fein:
Na faical tannais, na d' gheug ghlais.
'S lionmhar ceamna na marbh bu treun

Air oſna, dubh-aiſra' na bein,
Nuair ghluiſas a ghellach, an ear,
Mar ghlas-ſcia, du ſhiubhal nan ſpeur.

Ullin, a Charril, a Raono
Guith amſair a dh' aom o-ſhean:
Cluinim ſiobh an dorchadas *Shelma*
Agus moſglibhſe anam nan dán!

Ni ncluinim ſiobh ſhiol na mfón,
Cia an talla do neoil, 'mbail ar ſuain
Na tribuail ſiobh, clarſach nach tróm;
An truſcan ceo-madin 's cruaim.
Far an erich, gu fuaimar a ghrian
O ſtuaigh na ncean glas?

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient ſtate of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or ſongs. Hiſtory, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is ſeldom very inſtructive. The beginnings of ſociety, in every country, are involved in fabulous confuſion; and though they were not, they would furniſh few events worth recording. But, in every period of ſociety, human manners are a curious ſpectacle; and the moſt natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. Theſe preſent to us, what is much more valuable than the hiſtory of ſuch tranſactions as a rude age can afford, the hiſtory of human ima-

gination and paſſion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the moſt artleſs ages; diſcovering what objects they admired, and what pleaſures they purſued, before thoſe refinements of ſociety had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diverſify the tranſactions, but diſguiſe the manners of mankind.

Beſides this merit, which ancient poems have with philoſophical obſervers of human nature, they have another with perſons of taſte. They promiſe ſome of the higheſt beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpoliſhed we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the ſame time, with that enthuſiaſm, that vehemence and fire, which are the ſoul of poetry. For many circumſtances of thoſe times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical ſpirit. That ſtate, in which human nature ſhoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and paſſion.

In the infancy of ſocieties, men live ſcattered and diſperſed, in the midſt of ſolitary rural ſcenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and ſtrange; their wonder and ſurprize are frequently excited; and by the ſudden changes of fortune occurring in their unſettled ſtate of life, their paſſions are raiſed to the utmoſt.

Their paſſions have nothing to reſtrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They diſplay themſelves to one another without diſguiſe: and converſe and act in the uncovered ſimplicity of nature. As their feelings are ſtrong, ſo their language, of itſelf, aſſumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they deſcribe every thing in the ſtrongeſt colours; which of courſe renders their ſpeech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its riſe chiefly to two cauſes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and paſſion over the form of expreſſion. Both theſe cauſes concur in the infancy of ſociety. Figures are commonly conſidered as artificial modes of ſpeech, deviſed by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined ſtate. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have uſed ſo many figures of ſtyle, as in thoſe rude ages, when, beſides the power of a warm imagination to ſuggeſt lively images, the want of proper and preciſe terms for the ideas they would expreſs, obliged them to have recourſe to circumlocution, metaphor, compariſon, and all thoſe ſubſtituted forms of expreſſion, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold metaphorical ſtyle, than a modern European would adventure to uſe in an Epic poem.

In the progreſs of ſociety, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to ſprightlineſs and ſublimity. As the world advances, the underſtanding gains ground upon the imagination; the underſtanding is more exerciſed; the imagination, leſs. Fewer objects occur that are new or ſurprizing. Men apply themſelves to trace the cauſes of things; they correct and refine one another; they ſubdue or diſguiſe their paſſions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform ſtandard of politeneſs and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from ſterility to copiouſneſs, and at the ſame time, from fervour and enthuſiaſm, to correctneſs and preciſion. Style becomes more chaſte; but leſs animated. The progreſs of the world in this reſpect reſembles the progreſs of age in man. The powers of imagination are moſt vigorous and predominant in youth; thoſe of the underſtanding ripen more ſlowly, and often attain not their maturity, till the imagination begin to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently moſt glowing and animated in the firſt ages of ſociety. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleaſure on account of their livelineſs and vivacity; ſo the moſt ancient poems have often proved the greateſt favourites of nations.

Poetry has been ſaid to be more ancient than proſe: and however paradoxical ſuch an aſſertion may ſeem, yet, in a qualified ſenſe, it is true. Men certainly never converſed with one another in regular numbers; but even their ordinary language would, in ancient times, for the reaſons before aſſigned, approach to a poetical ſtyle; and the firſt compoſitions tranſmitted to poſterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal ſenſe, poems; that is, compoſitions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into ſome kind of numbers, and pronounced with a muſical modulation or tone. Muſick or ſong has been found coæval with ſociety among the moſt barbarous nations. The only ſubjects which could prompt men, in their firſt rude ſtate, to utter their thoughts in compoſitions of any length, were ſuch as naturally aſſumed the tone of poetry; praiſes of their gods, or of their anceſtors; commemorations of their own warlike exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And before writing was invented, no other compoſitions, except ſongs or poems, could take ſuch hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preſerved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too, that an extenſive ſearch would diſcover a certain

degree of reſemblance among all the moſt ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a ſimilar ſtate of manners, ſimilar objects and paſſions operating upon the imaginations of men, will ſtamp their productions with the ſame general character. Some diverſity will, no doubt, be occaſioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear ſuch reſembling features, as they do in the beginnings of ſociety. Its ſubſequent revolutions give riſe to the principal diſtinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely ſeparated, that current of human genius and manners, which deſcends originally from one ſpring. What we have been long accuſtomed to call the Oriental vein of poetry, becauſe ſome of the earlieſt poetical productions have come to us from the Eaſt, is probably no more Oriental than Occidental; it is characteriſtical of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in ſome meaſure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Oſſian ſeem to furniſh a remarkable proof.

Our preſent ſubject leads us to inveſtigate the ancient poetical remains, not ſo much of the Eaſt, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the Northern nations; in order to diſcover whether the Gothic poetry has any reſemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to conſider. Though the Goths, under which name we uſually compre-

hend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too from the earlieſt times, had their poets and their ſongs. Their poets were diſtinguiſhed by the tittle of *Scalders*, and their ſongs were termed *Vyſes*. * Saxo Grammaticus, a Da-

* Olaus Wormius, in the appendix to his Treatiſe de Literatura Runica, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from *Runes*, which ſignifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than 136 different kinds of meaſure or verſe uſed in their *Vyſes*; and though we are accuſtomed to call rhyme a Gothic invention, he ſays expreſly, that among all theſe meaſures, rhyme, or correſpondence of final ſyllables, was never employed. He analyſes the ſtructure of one of theſe kinds of verſe, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very ſingular ſpecies of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of ſyllables, but chiefly upon the number of the ſyllables, and the diſpoſition of the letters. In every ſtanza was an equal number of lines: in every line ſix ſyllables. In each diſtich, it was requiſite that three words ſhould begin with the ſame letter; two of the correſponding words placed in the firſt line of the diſtich, the third, in the ſecond line. In each line were alſo required two ſyllables, but never the final ones, formed either of the ſame conſonants, or ſame vowels. As an example of this meaſure, Olaus gives us theſe two Latin lines conſtructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verſe;

Chriſtus caput noſtrum
Coronet te bonis.

The initial letters of Chriſtus, Caput and Coronet, make

nish Hiſtorian of conſiderable note, who flouriſhed in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of theſe ſongs, containing the ancient traditionary ſtories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character; ſeveral of which he has tranſlated into Latin, and inſerted into his hiſtory. But his verſions are plainly ſo paraphraſtical, and forced into ſuch an imitation of the ſtyle and the meaſures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native ſpirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preſerved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Litteratura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral ſong, compoſed by Regner Lodbrog; and tranſlated by Olaus, word for word, from the original. This

the three correſponding letters of the diſtich. In the firſt line, the firſt ſyllables of Chriſtus and of noſtrum; in the ſecond line, the *on* in coronet and in bonis make the requiſite correſpondence of ſyllables. Frequent inverſions and tranſpoſitions were permited in this poetry; which would naturally follow from ſuch laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious on this ſubject may conſult likewiſe Dr. Hicks's Theſaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium; particularly the 23d chapter of his Grammatica Anglo Saxonica & Mæſo Gothica; where they will find a full account of the ſtructure of the Anglo-Saxon verſe, which nearly reſembled the Gothic. They will find alſo ſome ſpecimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Daniſh Scalders, entitled, Hervarer Saga, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the 6th volume of Miſcellany Poems, published by M. Dryden.

Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the ſame time an eminent *Scalder* or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at laſt into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was thrown into priſon, and condemned to be deſtroyed by ſerpents. In this ſituation he ſolaced himſelf with rehearſing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty-nine ſtanzas, of ten lines each; and every ſtanza begins with theſe words, Pugnavimus Enſibus, We have fought with our ſwords. Olaus's verſion is in many places ſo obſcure as to be hardly intelligible. I have ſubjoined the whole below, exactly as he as published it; and ſhall tranſlate as much as may give the English reader an idea of the ſpirit and ſtrain of this kind of poetry. *

* 1.

Pugnavimus Enſibus
Haud poſt longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia acceſſimus
Ad ſerpentis immenſi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod ſerpentem transfodi
Hirſutam braccam ob illam cædem
Cuſpide ictum intuli in colubrum
Ferro lucidorum ſtipendiorum.

2.

Multum juvenis fui quando acquiſivimus
Orientem verſus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ

« We have fought with our ſwords. – I was » young, when, towards the Eaſt, in the bay of » Oreon, we made torrents of blood flow, to

Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem ſonuerunt
Ad ſublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam eſcam
Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in ſanguine Cæſorum.

3.

Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti annos numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus paſſim
Vicimus octo barones
In oriente ante Domini portum
Aquilæ impetravimus tunc ſufficientem
Hoſpitii ſumptum in illa ſtrage
Sudor decidit in vulnerum
Oceano perdidit exercitus ætatem.

4.

Pugnæ facta copia
Cum Helſingianos poſtulavimus
Ad aulam Odini
Naves direximus in oſtium Viſtulæ
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladius in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.

5.

Memini neminem tunc fugiſſe
Priuſquam in navibus
Heraudus in bello caderet
Non findit navibus

» gorge the ravenous beaſt of prey, and the yel-
» low-footed bird. There reſounded the hard ſteel
» upon the lofty helmets of men. The whole

Alius baro præſtantior
Mare ad portum
In navibus longis poſt illum
Sic attulit princeps paſſim
Alacre in bellum cor.

6.

Exercitus abjecit clypeos
Cum haſta volavit
Ardua ad virorum pectora
Momordit Scarforum cautes
Gladius in pugna
Sanguineus erat Clypeus
Antequam Rafno rex caderet
Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
Calidus in loricas ſudor.

7.

Habere potuerunt tum corvi
Ante Indirorum inſulas
Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
Acquiſivimus feris carnivoris
Plenum prandium unico actu
Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
Oriente ſole
Spicula vidi pungere
Propulerunt arcus ex ſe ferra.

8.

Altum mugierunt enſes
Antequam in Laneo campo
Eiſlinus rex cecidit
Proceſſimus auro ditati
Ad terram proſtratorum dimicandum

» ocean was one wound. The crow waded in the
» blood of the ſlain. When we had numbered
» twenty years, we lifted our ſpears on high,'

Gladius fecuit Clypeorum
Picturas in galearum conventu
Cervicum muſtum ex vulneribus
Diffuſum per cerebrum fiſſum.

9.

Tenuimus Clypeos in ſanguine
Cum haſtam unximus
Ante Boring holmum
Telorum nubes diſrumpunt clypeum
Extruſit arcus ex ſe metallum
Volnir cecidit in conflictu
Non erat illo rex major
Cæſi diſperſi late per littora
Feræ amplectebantur eſcam.

10.

Pugna manifeſte creſcebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandrorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in auream
Loricam in pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit maturinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

11.

Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Ænglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per ſex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Tranſegimus mucronum miſſam

» and every where ſpread our renown. Eight
» barons we overcame in the Eaſt, before the port
» of Diminum; and plentifully we feaſted the eagle

In exortu ſolis
Coactus eſt pro noſtris gladiis
Valdioſur in bello occumbere.

12.

Ruit pluvia ſanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
Acriter mordebat Loricas
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
Venenate acutus conſperſus ſudore ſanguineo.

13.

Tenuimus magica ſcuta
Alte in pugnæ ludo
Ante Hiadningum ſinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat ſicut ſplendidam virginem
In lecto juxta ſe collocare.

14.

Dura venit tempeſtas Clypeis
Cadaver cecidit in terram
In Nortumbria
Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus neceſſum erat fugere
Ex prælio ubi acute
Caſſidis campos mordebant gladii

» in that ſlaughter. The warm ſtream of wounds
» ran into the ocean. The army fell before us.
» When we ſteered our ships into the mouth of

Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria ſede oſculari.

15.

Herthioſe evaſit fortunatus
In Auſtralibus Orcadibus ipſe
Victoriæ in noſtris hominibus
Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
Rogvaldus occumbere
Iſte venit ſummus ſuper accipitres
Luctus in gladiorum ludo
Strenue jactabat concuſſor
Galeæ ſanguinis teli.

16.

Quilibet jacebat tranſverſim ſupra alium
Gaudebat pugna lætus
Accipiter ob gladiorum ludum
Non fecit aquilam aut aprum
Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
Marſtanus rex jejunis
Fiebat in vedræ ſinu.
Præda data corvis.

17.

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
Mane ante machæram
Virum in mucronum diſſidio
Filio meo incidit mature
Gladius juxta cor
Egillus fecit Agnerum ſpoliatum
Imperterritum virum vita
Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
Griſeam loricam ſplendebant vexilla.

» the Viſtula, we ſent the Helſingians to the Hall
» of Odin. Then did the ſword bite. The waters
» were all one wound. The earth was dyed red

18.

Verborum tenaces vidi diſſecare
Haut minutim pro lupis
Endili maris enſibus
Erat per Hebdomadæ ſpacium
Quaſi mulieres vinum apportarent
Rubefactæ erant naves
Valde in ſtrepitu armorum
Sciſſa erat lorica
In Scioldangorum prælio.

19.

Pulchricomum vidi crepuſculacere
Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
Erat ſicut calidum balneum
Vinei vaſis nympha portaret
Nos in Ilæ freto
Antiquam Orn rex caderet
Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

20.

Egimus gladiorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis inſula
Cum regibus tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde lætari
Cecidit multus in rictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut ſatur inde diſcederet
Hybernorum ſanguis in oceanum
Copioſe decidit per mactationis tempus.

21.

Ake gladius mordebat Clypeos

» with the warm ſtream. The ſword rung upon » the coats of mail, and clove the bucklers in » twain. None fled on that day, till among his

Tunc cum aurei coloris
Haſta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs inſula
Per ſecula multum poſt
Ibi fuit ad gladiorum ludos
Reges proceſſerunt
Rubicundum erat circa inſulam
Ar volans Draco vulnerum.

22.

Quid eſt viro forti morte certius
Etſi ipſe in armorum nimbo
Adverſus collocatus ſit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Aquilam ad gladiorum ludum
Meticuloſus venit nuſpiam
Cordi ſuo uſui.

23.

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro.
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax eſſe in fremitu armorum.

24.

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata ſequimur
Rarus tranſgreditur fata Parcarum
Non deſtinavi Ellæ

» ships Heraudus fell. Than him no braver baron
» cleaves the ſea with ships; a chearful heart did
» he ever bring to the combat. Then the hoſt

De vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego ſanguinem ſemimortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protruſi
Paſſim impetravimus tum feris
Eſcam in Scotiæ ſinubus.

25.

Hoc ridere me facit ſemper
Quod Balderi patris ſcamna
Parata ſcio in aula
Bibemus cereviſiam brevi
Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
Magnifici in Odini domibus
Non venio deſperabundis
Verbis ad Odini aulam.

26.

Hic vellent nunc omnes
Filii Aſlaugæ gladiis
Amarum bellum excitare
Si exacte ſcirent
Calamitates noſtras
Quem non pauci angues
Venenati me diſcerpunt
Matrem accepi meis
Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

27.

Valde inclinatur ad hereditatem
Crudele ſtat nocumentum a vipera
Anguis inhabitat aulam cordis
Speramus alterius ad Othini
Virgam in Ellæ ſanguine

» threw away their shields, when the uplifted » ſpear flew at the breaſts of heroes. The ſword » bit the Scarfian rocks; bloody was the shield » in battle, until Rafno the king was ſlain. From » the heads of warriors the warm ſweat ſtreamed » down their armour. The crows around the In- » dirian iſlands had an ample prey. It were diffi- » cult to ſingle out one among ſo many deaths. » At the riſing of the ſun I beheld the ſpears pier- » cing the bodies of foes, and the bows throwing

Filiis meis liveſcet
Sua ira rubeſcet
Non acres juvenes
Seſſionem tranquillam facient.

28.

Habeo quinquagies
Prælia ſub ſignis facta
Ex belli invitatione & ſemel
Minime putavi hominum
Quod me futurus eſſet
Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
Alius rex præſtantior
Nos Aſæ invitabunt
Non eſt lugenda mors.

29.

Fert animus finire
Invitant me Dyſæ
Quas ex Othini Aula
Othinus mihi miſit
Lætus cereviſiam cum Aſis
In ſumma ſede bibam
Vitæ elapſæ ſunt horæ
Ridens moriar.

» forth their ſteel-pointed arrows. Loud roared » the ſwords in the plains of Lano. — The virgin » long bewailed the ſlaughter of that morning.» — In this ſtrain the poet continues to deſcribe ſeveral other military exploits. The images are not much varied; the noiſe of arms, the ſtreaming of blood, and the feaſting the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death of two of his ſons in battle; and the lamentation he deſcribes as made for one of them is very ſingular. A Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins or nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a young hero. But, ſays our Gothic poet, « when » Rogvaldus was ſlain, for him mourned all the » hawks of heaven », as lamenting a benefactor who had ſo liberally ſupplied them with prey; « for boldly », as he adds, « in the ſtrife of » ſwords, did the breaker of helmets throw the » ſpear of blood ».

The poem concludes with ſentiments of the higheſt bravery and contempt of death, « What is » more certain to the brave man than death, » though amidſt the ſtorm of ſwords, he ſtand al- » ways ready to oppoſe it? He only regrets this » life who hath never known diſtreſs. The timo- » rous man allures the devouring eagle to the » field of battle. The coward, wherever he » comes, is uſeleſs to himſelf. This I eſteem ho- » nourable, that the youth ſhould advance to the

» combat fairly matched one againſt another; nor
» man retreat from man. Long was this the war-
» rior's higheſt glory. He who aſpires to the love
» of virgins, ought always to be foremoſt in the
» roar of arms. It appears to me of truth, that
» we are led by the Fates. Seldom can any over-
» come the appointment of Deſtiny. Little did I
» foreſee that Ella * was to have my life in his
» hands, in that day when fainting I concealed my
» blood, and puſhed forth my ſhips into the wa-
» ves; after we had ſpread a repaſt for the beaſts
» of prey throughout the Scottiſh bays. But this
» makes me always rejoice that in the halls of
» our father Balder (or Odin) I know there are
» ſeats prepared, where, in a ſhort time, we
» ſhall be drinking ale out of the hollow ſkulls
» of our enemies. In the houſe of the mighty
» Odin, no brave man laments death. I come not
» with the voice of deſpair to Odin's hall. How
» eagerly would all the ſons of Aſlauga now ruſh
» to war, did they know the diſtreſs of their
» father, whom a multitude of venomous ſerpents
» tear! I have given to my children a mother
» who hath filled their hearts with valour. I am
» faſt approaching to my end. A cruel death awaits
» me from the viper's bite. A ſnake dwells in the
» midſt of my heart. I hope that the ſword of

* This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

» ſome of my ſons shall yet be ſtained with the » blood of Ella. The valiant youths will wax red » with anger, and will not ſit in peace. Fifty and » one times have I reared the ſtandard in battle. » In my youth I learned to dye the ſword in blood: » my hope was then, that no king among men » would be more renowned than me. The God- » deſſes of death will now ſoon call me; I muſt » not mourn my death. Now I end my ſong. The » Goddeſſes invite me away; they whom Odin » has ſent to me from his hall. I will ſit upon a » lofty ſeat, and drink ale joyfully with the God- » deſſes of death. The hours of my life are run » out. I will ſmile when I die ».

This is ſuch poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a moſt ferocious ſpirit. It is wild, harsh and irregular; but at the ſame time animated and ſtrong; the ſtyle, in the original, full of inverſions, and, as we learn from ſome of Olaus's notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Oſſian, a very different ſcene preſents itſelf. There we find the fire and the enthuſiaſm of the moſt early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderneſs, and even delicacy of ſentiment, greatly predominant over fierceneſs and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the ſofteſt feelings, and at the ſame time elevated

with the higheſt ideas of magnanimity, generoſity, and true heroiſm. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Oſſian, it is like paſſing from a ſavage deſart, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to theſe poems? This is a curious point; and requires to be illuſtrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is paſt all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners and religion, proves it to a full demonſtration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether diſtinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the Weſt of Europe; but ſeem to have had their moſt full and compleat eſtabliſhment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we ſeldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the inſtitution of which two orders, was the capital diſtinction of their manners and policy. The Druids were their philoſophers and prieſts; the Bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: And both theſe orders of men, ſeem to have ſubſiſted among them, as chief members of the ſtate, from time immemorial *. We muſt not therefore imagine

* Τρία ϛῦλα τῶν τιμωμένων διαφερόντως ἐϛί. Βαρδοὶ τε καὶ ὕατεις, καὶ Δρυίδαι. Βαρδοὶ μὲν ὑμνηταὶ καὶ ποιηταὶ. Strabo. lib. 4.

gine the Celtæ to have been altogether a groſs and rude nation. They poſſeſſed from very remote ages a formed ſyſtem of diſcipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and laſting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this expreſs teſtimony, that there flourished among them the ſtudy of the moſt laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whoſe office it was to ſing, in heroic verſe, the gallant actions of illuſtrious men; and by the Druids, who lived together in colleges or ſocieties, after the Pythagorean manner, and philoſophizing upon the higheſt ſubjects, aſſerted the immortality of the human ſoul *. Though Julius Cæſar in his account of Gaul, does not expreſly mention the Bards, yet it is plain that un-

Εἰσὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ μελῶν, οὓς βαρδοὺς ὀνομάζουσιν. οὗτοι δὲ μετ' ὀργάνων, ταῖς λυρικαῖς ὁμοίων, οὓς μὲν ὑμνοῦσι, οὓς δὲ βλασφημοῦσι. Diodor. Sicul. l. 5.

Τὰ δὲ ἀκουσματα αὐτῶν εἰσιν οἱ καλούμενοι βαρδοὶ, ποιηταὶ δ' οὗτοι τυγχανοῦσι μετ' ᾠδῆς ἐπαινοῦς λέγοντες. Poſidonius ap. Athenæum, l. 6.

* Per hæc loca (ſpeaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis, *viguere ſtudia laudabilium doctrinarum*; inchoata per Bardos & Euhages & Druidas. Et Bardi quidem fortia virorum illuſtrium facta heroicis compoſita verſibus cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantitarunt. Euhages vero ſcrutantes ſeriem & ſublimia naturæ pandere conabantur. Inter hos, Druidæ ingeniis celſiores, ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit, ſodalitiis adſtricti conſortiis, quæſtionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti ſunt; & deſpectantes humana pronuntiarunt animas immortales. Amm. Marcellinus, l. 15. cap. 9.

der the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the Bards, who, it is probable, were the diſciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deſerves remark, that according to his account, the Druidical inſtitution firſt took riſe in Britain, and paſſed from thence into Gaul; ſo that they who aſpired to be thorough maſters of that learning were wont to reſort to Britain. He adds too, that ſuch as were to be initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verſes, inſomuch that ſome employed twenty years in this courſe of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record theſe poems in writing, but ſacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race *.

So ſtrong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their Bards, that amidſt all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the Bards continued to flourish; not as a ſet of ſtrolling ſongſters, like the Greek Ἀοιδοὶ or Rhapſodiſts, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly reſpected in the ſtate, and ſupported by a public eſtabliſhment. We find them, according to the teſtimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Auguſtus Cæſar; and we find them remain-

* Vid. Cæſar de bello Gall. lib. 6.

ing under the ſame name, and exerciſing the ſame functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almoſt down to our own times. It is well known that in both theſe countries, every *Regulus* or chief had his own Bard, who was conſidered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands aſſigned him, which deſcended to his family. Of the honour in which the Bards were held, many inſtances occur in Oſſian's poems. On all important occaſions, they were the ambaſſadors between contending chiefs; and their perſons were held ſacred. « Cairbar feared to ſtretch » his ſword to the Bards, though his ſoul was » dark.–Looſe the Bards, ſaid his brother Cath- » mor, they are the ſons of other times. Their » voice ſhall be heard in other ages, when the » kings of Temora have failed ».

From all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in ſo high a degree to poetry, and to have made it ſo much their ſtudy from the earlieſt times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at firſt ſight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accuſtomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I muſt obſerve, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it exclude polished manners, it is, however, not inconſiſtent with generous ſentiments

and tender affections *. What degrees of friendship, love and heroiſm, may poſſibly be found to prevail in a rude ſtate of ſociety, no one can ſay. Aſtonishing inſtances of them we know, from hiſtory, have ſometimes appeared: and a few characters diſtinguished by thoſe high qualities, might

* Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its moſt perfect ſtate. Yet their love ſongs which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderneſs of ſentiment may be found in a country, into which the leaſt glimmering of ſcience has never penetrated. To moſt English readers theſe ſongs are well known by the elegant tranſlations of them in the Spectator, N. 366 and 406. I ſhall ſubjoin Scheffer's Latin verſion of one of them, which has the appearance of being ſtrictly literal.

Sol, clariſſimum emitte lumen in paludem Orra. Si eniſus in ſumma picearum cacumina ſcirem me viſurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica mea eſſet flores; omnes ſuſcinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præſecarem, hos virentes ramos. Curſum nubium eſſem ſecutus, quæ iter ſuum inſtituunt verſus paludem Orra, ſi ad te volare poſſem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi deſunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ, pedeſque, anſerum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectaſti diu; per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundiſſimis, corde tuo amiciſſimo. Quod ſi longiſſime velles effugere, cito tamen te conſequerer. Quid firmius validiuſve eſſe poteſt quam contorti nervi, catenæve ferreæ, quæ duriſſime ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput noſtrum, mutat cogitationes & ſententias. Puerorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos ſi audirem omnes, a via, a via juſta declinarem. Unum eſt conſilium quod capiam; ita ſcio viam rectiorem me reperturum. Schefferi Lapponia, Cap. 25.

lay a foundation for a ſet of manners being introduced into the ſongs of the Bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the uſual poetical licence, than the real manners of the country. In particular, with reſpect to heroiſm; the great employment of the Celtic Bards, was to delineate the characters, and ſing the praiſes of heroes. So Lucan;

> Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
> Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum
> Plurima ſecuri fuditis carmina Bardi.
>
> *Pharſ.* l. 1.

Now when we conſider a college or order of men, who, cultivating poetry throughout a long ſeries of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroiſm; who had all the poems and panegyricks, which were compoſed by their predeceſſors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outſtrip thoſe who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their ſongs with the higheſt luſtre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which diſtinguish a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the firſt ideas of heroiſm occurring to a barbarous people: But no ſooner had

ſuch ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind eaſily opens to the native repreſentations of human perfection, they would be ſeized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyricks; they would afford materials for ſucceeding Bards to work upon, and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the publick manners. For ſuch ſongs as theſe, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment, muſt have had a very conſiderable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even ſuch a hero as Fingal. Eſpecially when we conſider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which in a ſavage ſtate, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that immortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the ſongs of Bards *.

Having made theſe remarks on the Celtic poetry and Bards in general, I ſhall next conſider the particular advantages which Oſſian poſſeſſed.

* When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch Bards. This cruel policy plainly ſhews, how great an influence he imagined the ſongs of theſe Bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch Bards were of the ſame Celtic race with the Scottiſh and Iriſh.

He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I juſt now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other anceſtors of Fingal are ſpoken of as familiarly known. Ancient Bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable paſſage, Oſſian deſcribes himſelf as living in a ſort of claſſical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the ſongs of Bards; and points at a period of darkneſs and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. « His » words, » ſays he, « came only by halves to » our ears; they were dark as the tales of other » times, before the light of the ſong aroſe » Oſſian, himſelf, appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquiſite ſenſibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is ſo often an attendant on great genius; and ſuſceptible equally of ſtrong and of ſoft emotions. He was not only a profeſſed Bard, educated with care, as we may eaſily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he ſhews us himſelf, in intimate friendſhip with the other contemporary Bards, but a warrior alſo; and the ſon of the moſt renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumſtances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he ſings of battles in which he had

fought and overcome; he had beheld the moſt illuſtrious ſcenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroiſm in war, and magnificence in peace. For however rude the magnificence of thoſe times may ſeem to us, we muſt remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of diſtinguished ſplendor in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a conſiderable territory; he was enriched with the ſpoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all reſpects a perſonnage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of Clans, who lived in the ſame country, after a more extenſive monarchy was eſtabliſhed.

The manners of Oſſian's age, ſo far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two diſpiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetouſneſs and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amuſements, the muſick of Bards and « the » feaſt of ſhells. » The great object purſued by heroic ſpirits, was « to receive their fame, » that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the ſongs of Bards; and « to have their name on » the four grey ſtones. » To die, unlamented by

a Bard, was deemed ſo great a misfortune, as even to diſturb their ghoſts in another ſtate. « They wander in thick miſts beſide the reedy » lake; but never ſhall they riſe, without the » ſong, to the dwelling of winds. » After death, they expected to follow employments of the ſame nature with thoſe which had amuſed them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to purſue airy deer, and to liſten to their praiſe in the mouths of Bards. In ſuch times as theſe, in country where poetry had been ſo long cultivated, and ſo higly honoured, is it any wonder that among the race and ſucceſſion of Bards, one Homer ſhould ariſe; a man who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting in the courſe of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, ſhould attain a degree of eminence in poetry, worthy to draw the admiration of more refined ages?

The compoſitions of Oſſian are ſo ſtrongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to ſupport that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taſte, could heſitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great ſtages through which men ſucceſſively paſs in the progreſs of ſociety. The firſt and earlieſt is the life of hunters; paſturage

ſucceds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and laſtly, commerce. Throughout Oſſian's poems, we plainly find ourſelves in the firſt of theſe periods of ſociety; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring ſubſiſtence. Paſturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the caſe of a divorce; but the alluſions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture, we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned except that of navigation and of working in iron*. Every thing preſents

* Their skill in navigation need not at all ſurprize us. Living in the weſtern iſlands, along the coaſt, or in a country which is every where interſected with arms of the ſea, one of the firſt objects of their attention, from the earlieſt time, muſt have been how to traverſe the waters. Hence that knowledge of the ſtars, ſo neceſſary for guiding them by night, of which we find ſeveral traces in Oſſian's works; particularly in the beautiful deſcription of Cathmor's ſhield, in the 7th book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early ſtudied. Piratical incurſions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the firſt exploits which diſtinguiſhed them in the world. Even the ſavage Americans were at their firſt diſcovery found to poſſeſs the moſt ſurprizing skill and dexterity in navigating their immenſe lakes and rivers.

The deſcription of Cuchullin's chariot, in the 1ſt book of Fingal, has been objected to by ſome, as repreſenting greater magnificence than is conſiſtent with the ſuppoſed poverty of

to us the moſt ſimple and unimproved manners. At their feaſts, the heroes prepared their own repaſt; they ſat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whiſtled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the neceſſaries of life was known to them only as the ſpoil of the Roman province; « the gold of the » ſtranger, the lights of the ſtranger, the ſteeds » of the ſtranger, the children of the rein ».

This repreſentation of Oſſian's times, muſt ſtrike us the more, as genuine and authentick, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherſon has preſerved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five Bards are repreſented as paſſing the evening in the houſe of a chief, and each of them ſeparately giving his deſcription of the night. The night ſcenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the ſtyle and manner of Oſſian: But he has allowed ſome images to appear which betray a later period of ſociety. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows ſeeking ſhelter, the ſhepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the ſhocks ofcorn which had been overturned by the tempeſt. Whereas in Oſſian's works, from beginning to end, all is conſiſtent; no mo-

that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horſe-litter; and the gems mentioned in the deſcription, are no other than the ſhining ſtones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the weſtern coaſt of Scotland.

dern alluſion drops from him; but every where, the ſame face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The graſs of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thiſtle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landſcapes. « The deſart, » ſays Fingal, « is enough to me, with all its woods » and deer ».

The circle of ideas and tranſactions, is no wider than ſuits ſuch an age: Nor any greater diverſity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally diſplay. Valour and bodily ſtrength are the admired qualities. Contentions ariſe, as is uſual among ſavage nations from the ſlighteſt cauſes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feaſt, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, riſe to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of ſentiment indeed on ſeveral occaſions, but none of manners. They ſpeak of their paſt actions with freedom, boaſt of their exploits, and ſing their own praiſe. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or uſed. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but ſtriking a ſhield, or raiſing a loud cry: And hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a neceſſary qualification of a great general; like

the βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Μενέλαος of Homer. Of military diſcipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely deſtitute. Their armies ſeem not to have been numerous; their battles were diſorderly; and terminated, for the moſt part, by a perſonal combat, or wreſtling of the two chiefs; after which, « the bard ſung the ſong of peace, and » the battle ceaſed along the field ».

The manner of compoſition bears all the marks of the greateſt antiquity. No artful tranſitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; ſuch as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of compoſition were more ſtudied and known; but a ſtyle always rapid and vehement; in narration conciſe even to abruptneſs, and leaving ſeveral circumſtances to be ſupplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative caſt, which, as I before ſhewed, partly a glowing and undiſciplined imagination, partly the ſterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early ſpeech of nations; and in ſeveral reſpects, it carries a remarkable reſemblance to the ſtyle of the Old Teſtament. It deſerves particular notice, as one of the moſt genuine and deciſive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms or abſtract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Oſſian's works. The ideas of men, at firſt, were all par-

ticular. They had not words to expreſs general conceptions. Theſe were the conſequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of ſpeech. Oſſian, accordingly, almoſt never expreſſes himſelf in the abſtract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he ſaw around him. A public, a community, the univerſe, were conceptions beyond his ſphere. Even a mountain, a ſea, or a lake, which he has occaſion to mention, though only in a ſimile, are for the moſt part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the ſtorm of the ſea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expreſſion, which, whilſt it is characteriſtical of ancient ages, is at the ſame time highly favourable to deſcriptive poetry. For the ſame reaſons, perſonification is a poetical figure not very common with Oſſian. Inanimate objects, ſuch as winds, trees, flowers, he ſometimes perſonifies with great beauty. But the perſonifications, which are ſo familiar to later poets, of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the reſt of that claſs, were unknown to our Celtic Bard. Theſe were modes of conception too abſtract for his age.

All theſe are marks ſo undoubted, and ſome of them too, ſo nice and delicate, of the moſt early times, as put the high antiquity of theſe poems out of queſtion. Eſpecially when we conſi-

der, that if there had been any impoſture in this caſe, it muſt have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago; as up to this period, both by manuſcripts, and by the teſtimony of a multitude of living witneſſes, concerning the uncontrovertible tradition of theſe poems, they can clearly be traced. Now this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a compoſition of this kind, which it may not be ſuppoſed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thouſand years before. To ſuppoſe that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the Highlands to have been in a ſtate of groſs ignorance and barbarity, there ſhould have ariſen in that country a poet, of ſuch exquiſite genius, and of ſuch deep knowledge of mankind, and of hiſtory, as to diveſt himſelf of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a juſt and natural picture of a ſtate of ſociety ancienter by a thouſand years; one who could ſupport this counterfeited antiquity through ſuch a large collection of poems, without the leaſt inconſiſtency; and who, poſſeſſed of all this genius and art, had at the ſame time the ſelf-denial of concealing himſelf, and of aſcribing his own works to an antiquated Bard, without the impoſture being detected; is a ſuppoſition that tranſcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, beſides, two other circumſtances to be attended to, ſtill of greater weight, if poſſible, againſt this hypotheſis. One is, the total abſence of religious ideas from this work; for which the tranſlator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Oſſian. The Druidical ſuperſtition was, in the days of Oſſian, on the point of its final extinction; and for particular reaſons, odious to the family of Fingal; whilſt the Chriſtian faith was not yet eſtabliſhed. But had it been the work of one, to whom the ideas of Chriſtianity were familiar from his infancy; and who had ſuperadded to them alſo the bigotted ſuperſtition of a dark age and country; it is impoſſible but in ſome paſſage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumſtance is, the entire ſilence which reigns with reſpect to all the great Clans or families, which are now eſtabliſhed in the Highlands. The origin of theſe ſeveral Clans is known to be very ancient: And it is as well known, that there is no paſſion by which a native Highlander is more diſtinguiſhed, than by attachment to his Clan, and jealouſy for its honour. That a Highland Bard, in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, ſhould have inſerted no circumſtance which pointed out the riſe of his own Clan, which aſcertained its antiquity, or increaſed its glory, is

of all ſuppoſitions that can be formed, the moſt improbable; and the ſilence on this head, amounts to a demonſtration that the author lived before any of the preſent great Clans were formed or known.

Aſſuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems now under conſideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity; I proceed to make ſome remarks upon their general ſpirit and ſtrain. The two great characteriſtics of Oſſian's poetry are, tenderneſs and ſublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and chearful kind; an air of ſolemnity and ſerioufneſs is diffuſed over the whole. Oſſian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himſelf down into the light and amuſing ſtrain; which I readily admit to be no ſmall diſadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetick. One key note is ſtruck at the beginning, and ſupported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced, but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all ſerious and grave; the ſcenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the ſea ſhore; the mountain ſhaded with miſt; the torrent ruſhing through a ſolitary valley; the ſcattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moſs; all

produce a ſolemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Oſſian, an imagination that ſports itſelf, and dreſſes out gay trifles to pleaſe the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deſerves to be ſtiled, *The Poetry of the Heart.* It is a heart penetrated with noble ſentiments, and with ſublime and tender paſſions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itſelf forth. Oſſian did not write, like modern poets, to pleaſe readers and critics. He ſung from the love of poetry and ſong. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flouriſhed; to recall the affecting incidents of his life; to dwell upon his paſt wars and loves and friendſhips; till, as he expreſſes it himſelf, « there comes a voice » to Oſſian and awakes his ſoul. It is the voice » of years that are gone; they roll before me » with all their deeds »; and under this true poetic inſpiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we ſhould ſo often hear, and acknowledge in his ſtrains, the powerful and ever-pleaſing voice of nature.

—Arte, natura potentior omni.—
Eſt Deus in nobis, agitante caleſcimus illo.

It is neceſſary here to obſerve, that the beauties of Oſſian's writings cannot be felt by thoſe who have given them only a ſingle or a haſty

peruſal. His manner is ſo different from that of the poets, to whom we are moſt accuſtomed; his ſtyle is ſo conciſe, and ſo much crowded with imagery; the mind is kept at ſuch a ſtretch in accompanying the author; that an ordinary reader is at firſt apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleaſed. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed; and then it is impoſſible but his beauties muſt open to every reader who is capable of ſenſibility. Thoſe who have the higheſt degree of it, will relish them the moſt.

As Homer is of all the great poets, the one whoſe manner, and whoſe times come the neareſt to Oſſian's, we are naturally led to run a parallel in ſome inſtances between the Greek and the Celtic Bard. For though Homer lived more than a thouſand years before Oſſian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the ſtate of ſociety, that we are to judge of reſembling times. The Greek has, in ſeveral points, a manifeſt ſuperiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents; he poſſeſſes a larger compaſs of ideas; has more diverſity in his characters; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected, that in any of theſe particulars, Oſſian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where ſociety was much farther advanced; he had beheld many more objects; cities built

and flourishing; laws inſtituted; order, diſcipline, and arts begun. His field of obſervation was much larger and more ſplendid; his knowledge, of courſe, more extenſive; his mind alſo, it ſhall be granted, more penetrating. But if Oſſian's ideas and objects be leſs diverſified than thoſe of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fitteſt for poetry: The bravery and generoſity of heroes; the tenderneſs of lovers, the attachements of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undiſſipated mind broods over them more; they ſtrike the imagination, and fire the paſſions in a higher degree; and of conſequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the ſame events, when ſcattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more chearful and ſprightly poet than Oſſian. You diſcern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Oſſian uniformly maintains tne gravity and ſolemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great meaſure to be accounted for from the different ſituations in which they lived, partly perſonal, and partly national. Oſſian had ſurvived all his friends, and was diſpoſed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But beſides this, chearfulneſs is one of the many bleſſings which we owe to formed ſociety. The ſoli-

tary wild ſtate is always a ſerious one. Bating the ſudden and violent burſts of mirth, which ſometimes break forth at their dances and feaſts, the ſavage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be alſo remarked in Oſſian. On all occaſions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a deſcription, than is juſt ſufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his deſcriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumſtances. Both the poets are dramatick; that is, they introduce their perſonages frequently ſpeaking before us. But Oſſian is conciſe and rapid in his ſpeeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had alſo ſome portion of the Greek loquacity. His ſpeeches indeed are highly characteriſtical; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable diſplay he has given of human nature. Yet if he be tedious any where; it is in theſe; ſome of them trifling, and ſome of them plainly unſeaſonable. Both poets are eminently ſublime; but a difference may be remarked in the ſpecies of their ſublimity. Homer's ſublimity is accompained with more impetuoſity and fire; Oſſian's with more of a ſolemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries

you along; Oſſian elevates, and fixes you in aſtonishment. Homer is moſt ſublime in actions and battles; Oſſian, in deſcription and ſentiment. In the pathetick, Homer, when he chuſes to exert it, has great power; but Oſſian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderneſs far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to ſeize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of ſentiment, the preeminence muſt clearly be given to Oſſian. This is indeed a ſurpriſing circumſtance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic Bard ſhould be diſtinguiſhed to ſuch a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even thoſe of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by thoſe of Oſſian.

After theſe general obſervations on the genius and ſpirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view, and more accurate examination of his works: and as Fingal is the firſt great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuſe the title of an epic poem to Fingal, becauſe it is not in every little particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere ſqueamiſhneſs and pedantry of criticiſm. Examined even according to Ariſtotle's rules, it will be found to have all the eſſential requiſites of a true and regular epic; and to have ſeveral of

them in ſo high a degree, as at firſt view to raiſe our aſtonishment on finding Oſſian's compoſition ſo agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our aſtonishment will ceaſe, when we conſider from what ſource Ariſtotle drew thoſe rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticiſm than Oſſian. But guided by nature, he compoſed in verſe a regular ſtory, founded on heroic actions, which all poſterity admired. Ariſtotle, with great ſagacity and penetration, traced the cauſes of this general admiration. He obſerved what it was in Homer's compoſition, and in the conduct of his ſtory, which gave it ſuch power to pleaſe; from this obſervation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and pleaſe like Homer; and to a compoſition formed according to ſuch rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole ſyſtem aroſe. Ariſtotle ſtudied nature in Homer. Homer and Oſſian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there ſhould be ſuch agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Ariſtotle concerning an epic poem, are theſe: that the action which is the ground work of the poem, ſhould be one, compleat, and great; that it ſhould be feigned, not merely hiſtorical; that it ſhould be enlivened with characters and manners; and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of theſe, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Boſſu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illuſtrate ſome moral truth. The poet, ſays this critic, muſt begin with fixing on ſome maxim, or inſtruction, which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æſop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus ſettled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary hiſtory for names and incidents, to give his fable ſome air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may ſafely pronounce, that he who should compoſe an epic poem after this manner, who should firſt lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his perſonages and actors, might deliver indeed very ſound inſtruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the leaſt doubt that the firſt object which ſtrikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or ſubject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any ſubject a poet can chuſe for ſuch a work, but will afford ſome general moral inſtruction. An epic poem is by its nature one of the moſt moral of all poetical compoſitions: But his moral tendency is by no means to be limited to ſome common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the ſtory. It ariſes

from

from the admiration of heroic actions, which ſuch a compoſition is peculiarly calculated to produce; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raiſe, whilſt we read it; from the happy impreſſion which all the parts ſeparately, as well as the whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be ſtill inſiſted on, Fingal obviouſly furniſhes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That wiſdom and bravery always triumph over brutal force; or another nobler ſtill; That the moſt compleat victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generoſity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the Epic action, which, of all Ariſtotle's rules, is the chief and moſt material, is ſo ſtrictly preſerved in Fingal, that it muſt be perceived by every reader. It is a more compleat unity than what ariſes from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic juſtly cenſures as imperfect; it is the unity of one enterpriſe, the deliverance of Ireland from the invaſion of Swaran: An enterpriſe, which has ſurely the full Heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a conſtant reference to one end; no double plot is carried on; but the parts unite into a regular whole: And as the action is one and great, ſo it is an entire or compleat action. For we find, as the Critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; a Nodus, or intrigue in the poem; dif-

ficulties occuring through Cuchullin's rashneſs and bad ſucceſs; thoſe difficulties gradually ſurmounted; and at laſt the work conducted to that happy concluſion which is held eſſential to Epic poetry. Unity is indeed obſerved with greater exactneſs in Fingal, than in almoſt any other Epic compoſition. For not only is unity of ſubject maintained, but that of time and place alſo. The Autumn is clearly pointed out as the ſeaſon of the action; and from beginning to end, the ſcene is never ſhifted from the heath of Lena, along the ſea-ſhore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much ſhorter than in the Iliad or Æneid. But ſure, there may be ſhorter as well as longer Heroic poems; and if the authority of Ariſtotle be alſo required for this, he ſays expreſly that the Epic compoſition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the Iliad laſts only forty-ſeven days, whilſt that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of ſentiment, ſtyle and imagery, which ought ever to diſtinguish this high ſpecies of poetry. The ſtory is conducted with no ſmall art. The Poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but haſtening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a moſt happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace,

Semper ad eventum feſtinat, & in medias res,
Non ſecus ac notas, auditorem rapit—
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo.
De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muſe, for he acknowledged none; but his occaſional addreſſes to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muſe. He ſets out with no formal propoſition of his ſubject; but the ſubject naturally and eaſily unfolds itſelf; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the ſituation of Cuchullin, and the arrival of a ſcout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is preſently made of Fingal, and of the expected aſſiſtance from the ships of the lonely iſle, in order to give further light to the ſubject. For the poet often shows his addreſs in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations that are raiſed, and the extreme magnificence fully anſwering theſe expectations, with which the hero is at length preſented to us, are all worked up with ſuch skilful conduct, as would do honour to any poet of the moſt refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been univerſally admired. Oſſian certainly shows no leſs art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpoſe, than the whole management of the laſt battle, wherein Gaul the

ſon of Morni, had beſought Fingal to retire, and to leave to him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generoſity of the King in agreeing to this propoſal; the majeſty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his Bards, and waving the lightning of his ſword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingneſs to deprive them of the glory of victory by coming in perſon to their aſſiſtance, firſt ſending Ullin the Bard, to animate their courage; and at laſt, when the danger becomes more preſſing, his riſing in his might, and interpoſing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumſtances contrived with ſo much art as plainly diſcover the Celtic Bards to have been not unpractiſed in Heroic poetry.

The ſtory which is the foundation of the Iliad is in itſelf as ſimple as that of Fingal. A quarrel ariſes between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female ſlave; on which, Achilles, apprehending himſelf to be injured, withdraws his aſſiſtance from the reſt of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great diſtreſs, and beſeech him to be reconciled to them. He refuſes to fight for them in perſon, but ſends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being ſlain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The ſubject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland; Cuchullin, the

guardian of the young King, had applied for aſſiſtance to Fingal, who reigned in the oppoſite coaſt of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by raſh counſel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and deſponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for ſome time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once ſaved his life, makes him diſmiſs him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his ſtory with a much greater variety of particulars than Oſſian; and, in this, has ſhown a compaſs of invention ſuperior to that of the other poet. But it muſt not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumſtantial, his incidents however are leſs diverſified in kind than thoſe of Oſſian. War and bloodſhed reign throughout the Iliad; and notwithſtanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is ſo much uniformity in his ſubjects, that there are few readers, who before the cloſe, are not tired of perpetual fighting. Whereas in Oſſian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diverſity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroiſm, with love and friendſhip, of martial, with tender ſcenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The Epiſodes too, have great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: conſiſting of the ſongs of Bards, which are known to

have been the great entertainement of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. Theſe ſongs are not introduced at random; if you except the Epiſode of Duchommar and Morna, in the firſt book, which though beautiful, is more unartful, than any of the reſt; they have always ſome particular relation to the actor who is intereſted, or to the events which are going on; and, whilſt they vary the ſcene, they preſerve a ſufficient connection with the main ſubject, by the fitneſs and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca, influences ſome circumſtances of the poem, particularly the honourable diſmiſſion of Swaran at the end; it was neceſſary that we ſhould be let into this part of the hero's ſtory. But as it lay without the compaſs of the preſent action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an Epiſode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety, as if Ariſtotle himſelf had directed the plan, has contrived an Epiſode for this purpoſe in the ſong of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The concluſion of the poem is ſtrictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleaſing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the conſolation of Cuchullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, ſooth the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that paſſage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repoſe,

which critics require as the proper termination of the Epic work. « Thus they paſſed the night in » ſong, and brought back the morning with joy. » Fingal aroſe on the heath; and ſhook his glit- » tering ſpear in his hand. He moved firſt to- » wards the plains of Lena; and we followed like » a ridge of fire. Spread the ſail, ſaid the King of » Morven, and catch the winds that pour from » Lena. —We roſe on the wave with ſongs; and » rushed with joy through the foam of the ocean ». —So much for the unity and general conduct of the Epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the ſubject which Ariſtotle requires that it ſhould be feigned not hiſtorical, he muſt not be underſtood ſo ſtrictly, as if he meant to exclude all ſubjects which have any foundation in truth. For ſuch excluſion would both be unreaſonable in itſelf; and what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on hiſtorical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Ariſtotle means no more, than that it is the buſineſs of a poet not to be a mere annaliſt of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and uſeful fictions; to copy nature, as he himſelf explains it, like painters, who preſerve a likeneſs, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Oſſian has followed this courſe, and

building upon true hiſtory, has ſufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be queſtioned by moſt readers. At the ſame time, the foundation which thoſe facts and characters had in truth, and the ſhare which the poet himſelf had in the tranſactions which he records, muſt be conſidered as no ſmall advantage to his work. For truth makes an impreſſion on the mind far beyond any fiction; and no man, let his imagination be ever ſo ſtrong, relates any events ſo feelingly as thoſe in which he has been intereſted; paints any ſcene ſo naturally as one which he has ſeen; or draws any characters in ſuch ſtrong colours as thoſe which he has perſonally known. It is conſidered as an advantage of the Epic ſubject to be taken from a period ſo diſtant, as by being involved in the darkneſs of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Oſſian's ſubject may at firſt view appear unfavourable in this reſpect, as being taken from his own times, yet when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age; that he relates what had been tranſacted in another country, at the diſtance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the ſtage; we ſhall find the objection in a great meaſure obviated. In ſo rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was looſe, and accuracy of any kind little attended

to, what was great and heroic in one generation, eaſily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural repreſentation of human characters in an Epic poem is highly eſſential to its merit: And in reſpect of this there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Oſſian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at leaſt, if not ſuperior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the diſplay of human nature which the ſimple occurences of his times could be expected to furniſh. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but on the contrary the principal characters are not only clearly diſtinguiſhed, but ſometimes artfully contraſted ſo as to illuſtrate each other. Oſſian's heroes are like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like thoſe of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For inſtance; the prudent, the ſedate, the modeſt and circumſpect Connal, is finely oppoſed to the preſumptuous, raſh, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuchullin into action by his temerity; and when he ſees the bad effect of his counſels, he will not ſurvive the diſgrace. Connal, like another Ulyſſes, attends Cuchullin to his retreat, counſels, and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high ſpirited Swaran is admirably contraſted with the calm, the moderate,

and generous Fingal. The character of Oſcar is a favourite one throughout the whole poem. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuoſity in the day of action; his paſſion for fame; his ſubmiſſion to his father; his tenderneſs for Malvina; are the ſtrokes of a maſterly pencil; the ſtrokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Oſſian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the Bard, all in one, preſents to us through the whole work a moſt reſpectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleaſure. Cuchullin is a hero of the higheſt claſs; daring, magnanimous, and exquiſitely ſenſible to honour. We become attached to his intereſt, and are deeply touched with his diſtreſs; and after the admiration raiſed for him in the firſt part of the poem, it is a ſtrong proof of Oſſian's maſterly genius, that he durſt adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuchullin, ſhould be only an inferior perſonage; and who ſhould riſe as far above him, as Cuchullin riſes above the reſt.

Here indeed, in the character and deſcription of Fingal, Oſſian triumphs almoſt unrivalled: For we may boldly defy all antiquity to ſhew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector poſſeſſes ſeveral great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a ſecondary perſonage in the Iliad;

not the hero of the work. We ſee him only occaſionally; we know much leſs of him than we do of Fingal; who not only in this Epic poem, but in Temora, and throughout the reſt of Oſſian's works, is preſented in all that variety of lights, which give the full diſplay of a character. And though Hector faithfully diſcharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the ſame ſavage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him inſulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the moſt cruel taunts, and telling him when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, ſtripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, ſhall be devoured by the vultures *. Whereas in the character of Fingal, concur almoſt all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wiſdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of « Fin-» gal of the mildeſt look »; and diſtinguiſhed on every occaſion, by humanity and generoſity. He is merciful to his foes **; full of affection

* Iliad 16. 830, Iliad 17. 127.

** When he commands his ſons, after Swaran is taken

to his children; full of concern about his friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his firſt love, without the utmoſt tenderneſs. He is the univerſal protector of the diſtreſſed; « None ever » went ſad from Fingal ». – « O Oſcar! bend » the ſtrong in arms; but ſpare the feeble hand. » Be thou a ſtream of many tides againſt the foes » of thy people; but like the gale that moves » the graſs, to thoſe who ask thine aid. So » Trenmor lived; ſuch Trathal was; and ſuch » has Fingal been. My arm was the ſupport » of the injured; the weak reſted behind the » lightning of my ſteel ». – Theſe were the maxims of true heroiſm, to which he formed his grandſon. His fame is repreſented as every where ſpread; the greateſt heroes acknowledge his ſuperiority; his enemies tremble at his name; and the higheſt encomium that can be beſtowed on one whom the poet would moſt exalt, is to ſay, that his ſoul was like the ſoul of Fingal.

To do juſtice to the poet's merit, in ſuppor-

priſoner, to « purſue the reſt of Lochlin, over the heath » of Lena; that no veſſel may hereafter bound on the dark- » rolling waves of Iniſtore »; he means not aſſuredly, as ſome have miſrepreſented him, to order a general ſlaughter of the foes, and to prevent their ſaving themſelves by flight; but, like a wiſe general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory compleat, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any fleet againſt him or his allies.

ting ſuch a character as this, I muſt obſerve, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in ſuch a manner, as to render it diſtinct and affecting to the mind. Some ſtrokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what uſually give us the moſt clear view, and the moſt ſenſible impreſſion of a character; becauſe they preſent to us a man, ſuch as we have ſeen; they recall known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and deſcribe a faultleſs hero, they, for the moſt part, ſet before us, a ſort of vague undiſtinguishable character, ſuch as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itſelf, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated, inſipid perſonage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Oſſian, to our aſtonishment, has ſucceſsfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheleſs a real man; a character which touches and intereſts every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has repreſented him as an old man; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumſtances, peculiar to that age,

which paint him to the fancy in a more diſtinct light. He is ſurrounded with his family; he inſtructs his children in the principles of virtue; he is narrative of his paſt exploits; he is venerable with the grey locks of age; he is frequently diſpoſed to moralize, like an old man, on human vanity and the proſpect of death. There is more art, at leaſt more felicity, in this, than may at firſt be imagined. For youth and old age, are the two ſtates of human life, capable of being placed in the moſt picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumſtances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a ſituation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be cloathed with a variety of circumſtances, it always ſtands out more clear and full in poetical deſcription.

Beſides human perſonages, divine or ſupernatural agents are often introduced into Epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which moſt critics hold to be an eſſential part. The marvellous, it muſt be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for ſtriking and ſublime deſcription. No wonder therefore, that all poets ſhould have a ſtrong propenſity towards it. But I muſt obſerve, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjuſt properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet ſacrifices probability, and fills his

work with extravagant ſupernatural ſcenes, he ſpreads over it an appearance of romance and childiſh fiction; he tranſports his readers from this world, into a phantaſtick, viſionary region; and loſes that weight and dignity which ſhould reign in Epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a laſting or deep impreſſion. Human actions and manners, are always the moſt intereſting objects which can be preſented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty, which withdraws theſe too much from wiew; or obſcures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Beſides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have ſome foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what ſyſtem of the marvellous he pleaſes: He muſt avail himſelf either of the religious faith, or the ſuperſtitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; ſo as to give an air of probability to events which are moſt contrary to the common courſe of nature.

In theſe reſpects, Oſſian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the ſame courſe with Homer. For it is perfectly abſurd to imagine, as ſome critics have done, that Homer's mythology was invented by him, in conſequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no ſuch refining genius. He found the traditionary ſtories on

which he built his Iliad, mingled with popular legends, concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted theſe, becauſe they amuſed the fancy. Oſſian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghoſts and ſpirits: It is likely he believed them himſelf; and he introduced them, becauſe they gave his poems that ſolemn and marvellous caſt, which ſuited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; becauſe it was the only intervention of ſupernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; becauſe it did not interfere in the leaſt, with the proper diſplay of human characters and actions; becauſe it had leſs of the incredible, than moſt other kinds of poetical machinery; and becauſe it ſerved to diverſify the ſcene, and to heighten the ſubject by an awful grandeur, which is the great deſign of machinery.

As Oſſian's mythology is peculiar to himſelf, and makes a conſiderable figure in his other poems, as well as in Fingal, it may be proper to make ſome obſervations on it, independent of its ſubſerviency to Epic compoſition. It turns for the moſt part on the appearances of departed ſpirits. Theſe, conſonantly to the notions of every rude age, are repreſented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be viſible or inviſible at pleaſure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak

but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a ſeparate ſtate, they retain the ſame diſpoſitions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and purſue deer formed of clouds. The ghoſts of departed Bards continue to ſing. The ghoſts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. « They reſt together in their caves, and » talk of mortal men. Their ſongs are of other » worlds. They come ſometimes to the ear of reſt, » and raiſe their feeble voice ». All this preſents to us much the ſame ſet of ideas, concerning ſpirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the Odyſſey, where Ulyſſes viſits the regions of the dead: And in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, the ghoſt of Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vaniſhes preciſely like one of Oſſian's, emitting a ſhrill, feeble cry, and melting away like ſmoke.

But though Homer's and Oſſian's ideas concerning ghoſts were of the ſame nature, we cannot but obſerve, that Oſſian's ghoſts are drawn with much ſtronger and livelier colours than thoſe of Homer. Oſſian deſcribes ghoſts with all the particularity of one who had ſeen and converſed with them, and whoſe imagination was full of the impreſſion they had left upon it. He calls up thoſe awful and tremendous ideas which the

—Simulacra modis pallentia miris,

are fitted to raiſe in the human mind; and which,

in Shakeſpear's ſtyle, « harrow up the ſoul ». Crugal's ghoſt, in particular, in the beginning of the ſecond book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, deſcribed by any Epic or Tragic poet whatever. Moſt poets would have contented themſelves with telling us, that he reſembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dreſs were the ſame, only his face more pale and ſad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Oſſian ſets before our eyes a ſpirit from the inviſible world, diſtinguished by all thoſe features, which a ſtrong aſtonished imagination would give to a ghoſt. « A » dark-red ſtream of fire comes down from the » hill. Crugal ſat upon the beam; he that lately » fell by the hand of Swaran, ſtriving in the bat» tle of heroes. His face is like the beam of the » ſetting moon. His robes are of the clouds of the » hill. His eyes are like two decaying flames. » Dark is the wound of his breaſt.—The ſtars » dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice » was like the ſound of a diſtant ſtream ». The circumſtance of the ſtars being beheld, « dim» twinkling through his form », is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the moſt lively impreſſion of his thin and ſhadowy ſubſtance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed, and the ſpeech put into his mouth, are full of that ſolemn and awful ſublimity, which ſuits the ſub-

ject. « Dim, and in tears, he ſtood and ſtretched » his pale hand over the hero. Faintly he raiſed » his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy » Lego.—My ghoſt, O Connal! is on my native » hills; but my corſe is on the ſands of Ullin. » Thou ſhalt never talk with Crugal, or find his » lone ſteps in the heath. I am light as the blaſt » of Cromla; and I move like the ſhadow of miſt. » Connal, ſon of Colgar! I ſee the dark cloud » of death. It hovers over the plains of Lena. » The ſons of green Erin ſhall fall. Remove » from the field of ghoſts.—Like the darkened » moon he retired in the midſt of the whiſtling » blaſt ».

Several other appearances of ſpirits might be pointed out, as among the moſt ſublime paſſages of Oſſian's poetry. The circumſtances of them are conſiderably diverſified; and the ſcenery always ſuited to the occaſion. « Oſcar ſlowly aſcends the » hill. The meteors of night ſet on the heath » before him. A diſtant torrent faintly roars. Un- » frequent blaſts rush through aged oaks. The » half-enlightened moon ſinks dim and red be- » hind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the » heath. Oſcar drew his ſword ».—Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful ſcene that is to follow. « Trenmor came from his » hill, at the voice of his mighty ſon. A cloud, » like the ſteed of the ſtranger, ſupported his

» airy limbs. His robe is of the miſt of Lano, that » brings death to the people. His ſword is a green » meteor, half-extinguished. His face is without » form, and dark. He ſighed thrice over the hero: » And thrice, the winds of the night roared ar- » ound. Many were his words to Oſcar—He ſlowly » vanished, like a miſt that melts on the ſunny » hill ». To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble deſcription in the book of Job: « In thoughts from the viſions of » the night, when deep ſleep falleth on men, » fear cam upon me, and trembling, which made » all my bones to shake. Then a ſpirit paſſed » before my face. The hair of my fleſh ſtood up. » It ſtood ſtill; but I could not diſcern the form » thereof. An image was before mine eyes. There » was ſilence; and I heard a voice—ſhall mortal » man be more juſt than God* »?

As Oſſian's ſupernatural beings are deſcribed with a ſurprizing force of imagination, ſo they are introduced with propriety. We have only three ghoſts in Fingal: That of Crugal, which comes to warn the hoſt of impending deſtruction, and to adviſe them to ſave themſelves by retreat; that of Evirallin, the ſpouſe of Oſſian, which calls him to riſe and reſcue their ſon from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, juſt before the laſt en-

* Job. iv. 13—17.

gagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching deſtruction of her kinſmen and people. In the other poems, ghoſts ſometimes appear when invoked to foretell futurity; frequently, according to the notions of theſe times, they come as fore-runners of misfortune or death, to thoſe whom they viſit; ſometimes they inform their friends at a diſtance, of their own death; and ſometimes they are introduced to heighten the ſcenery on ſome great and ſolemn occaſion. « A hundred oaks burn to the » wind; and faint light gleams over the heath. » The ghoſts of Ardven paſs through the beam; » and ſhew their dim and diſtant forms. Comala » is half-unſeen on her meteor; and Hidallan is » ſullen and dim ». – « The awful faces of other » times, looked from the clouds of Crona ». – « Fercuth! I ſaw the ghoſt of night. Silent he » ſtood on that bank; his robe of miſt flew on » the wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man » he ſeemed, and full of thought ».

The ghoſts of ſtrangers mingle not with thoſe of the natives. « She is ſeen; but not like the » daughters of the hill. Her robes are from the » ſtrangers land; and she is ſtill alone ». When the ghoſt of one whom we had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is ſtill preſerved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghoſt, in the poem entit-

led The Death of Cuchullin. He ſeems to fore-bode Cuchullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuchullin reproaches him for ſuppoſing that he could be intimidated by ſuch prognoſtics. „ Why doſt thou bend thy dark eyes on me, ghoſt „ of the car-borne Calmar! Would'ſt thou fright- „ ten me, O Matha's ſon! from the battles of Cor- „ mac? Thy hand was not feeble in war; neither „ was thy voice for peace. How art thou chang- „ ed, chief of Lara! if now thou doſt adviſe to „ fly!—Retire thou to thy cave: Thou art not „ Calmar's ghoſt: He delighted in battle; and „ his arm was like the thunder of heaven ». Calmar makes no return to this ſeeming reproach: But, « He retired in his blaſt with joy; for he „ had heard the voice of his praiſe ». This is preciſely the ghoſt of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithſtanding all the diſſatisfaction he expreſſes with his ſtate in the region of the dead, as ſoon as he had heard his ſon Neoptolemus praiſed for his gallant behaviour, ſtrode away with ſilent joy to rejoin the reſt of the ſhades *.

It is a great advantage of Oſſian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of moſt other ancient poets; which of courſe is apt to ſeem ridiculous, after the ſuperſtitions have paſſed away on which it was founded. Oſſian's mythology is, to ſpeak ſo, the mythology of

* Odyſſ. Lib. 11.

human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed ſpirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amuſing; but far from being always ſupported with proper dignity. The indecent ſquabbles among his gods, ſurely do no honour to Epic poetry. Whereas Oſſian's machinery has dignity upon all occaſions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper, becauſe coincident with the ſtrain and ſpirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unſuitable to the ſubjects on which Oſſian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always ſolemn, it is not, however, always dreary or diſmal; it is enlivened, as much as the ſubject would permit, by thoſe pleaſant and beautiful appearances, which he ſometimes introduces, of the ſpirits of the hill. Theſe are gentle ſpirits; deſcending on ſun-beams; fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices ſweet; and their viſits to men propitious. The greateſt praiſe that can be given, to the beauty of a living woman, is to ſay, « She is » fair as the ghoſt of the hill; when it moves » in a ſun-beam at noon, over the ſilence of » Morven ». — « The hunter ſhall hear my voice » from his booth. He ſhall fear, but love my

» voice. For ſweet ſhall my voice be for my » friends; for pleaſant where they to me ».

Beſides ghoſts, or the ſpirits of departed men, we find in Oſſian ſome inſtances of other kinds of machinery. Spirits of a ſuperior nature to ghoſts are ſometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and ſtorms, and pour them on the land of the ſtranger; to overturn foreſts, and to ſend death among the people. We have prodigies too; a ſhower of blood; and when ſome diſaſter is befalling at a diſtance, the ſound of death heard on the ſtrings of Oſſian's harp: all perfectly conſonant not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a ſuperſtitious imagination in all countries. The deſcription of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the aſcent of Malvina into it, deſerves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear tranſcribing the paſſage, as it muſt have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Oſſian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, oppoſed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian God; the appearance and the ſpeech of that awful ſpirit; the wound which he receives, and the ſhriek which he ſends forth, « as rolled into him-

» ſelf,

» ſelf, he roſe upon the wind »; are full of the moſt amazing and terrible majeſty. I know no paſſage more ſublime in the writings of any uninſpired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it ſo unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at firſt be thought. According to the notions of thoſe times, ſupernatural beings were material, and conſequently, vulnerable. The ſpirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the ſtone of his power; he plainly conſidered him as the God of his enemies only; as a local deity, whoſe dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshiped; who had, therefore, no tittle to threaten him, and no claim to his ſubmiſſion. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority, for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the Gods whom that chief himſelf worshiped, Oſſian ſurely is pardonable for making his hero ſuperior to the God of a foreign territory *.

* The ſcene of this encounter of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda is laid in Iniſtore, or the iſlands of Orkney; and in the deſcription of Fingal's landing there, it is ſaid, « A rock bends along the coaſt with all its echoing wood. » On the top is the circle of Loda, with the moſſy ſtone » of power ». In confirmation of Oſſian's topography, it is proper to acequaint the reader that in theſe iſlands, as

Notwitſtanding the poetical advantages which I have aſcribed to Oſſian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect; had the author diſcovered ſome knowledge of a ſupream Being. Although his ſilence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious tranſlator in a very probable manner, yet ſtill it muſt be held a conſiderable diſadvantage to the poetry. For the moſt auguſt and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry are derived from the belief of a divine adminiſtration of the univerſe: And hence the invocation of a ſupream Being, or at leaſt of ſome ſuperior powers who are conceived as preſiding over human affairs, the ſolemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and aſſiſtance implored on

I have been well informed, there are many pillars, and circles of ſtones, ſtill remaining, known by the name of the ſtones and circles of Loda, or Loden; to which ſome degree of ſuperſtitious regard is annexed to this day. Theſe iſlands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Danish dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet ſome remains among the natives, is called the Norſe; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the ſuperſtitions of the inhabitants, are quite diſtinct from thoſe of the Highlands and weſtern iſles of Scotland. Their ancient ſongs too, are of a different ſtrain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite ſubjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the weſtern iſlands.

critical occaſions, appear with great dignity in the works of almoſt all poets as chief ornaments of their compoſitions. The abſence of all ſuch religious ideas from Oſſian's poetry, is a ſenſible blank in it; the more to be regretted, as we can eaſily imagine what an illuſtrious figure they would have made under the management of ſuch a genius as his; and how finely they would have been adapted to many ſituations which occur in his works.

After ſo particular an examination of Fingal, it were needleſs to enter into as full a diſcuſſion of the conduct of Temora, the other Epic poem. Many of the ſame obſervations, eſpecially with regard to the great characteriſtics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of Temora, requires that we ſhould not paſs it by without ſome remarks.

The ſcene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland; and the action is of a poſterior date. The ſubject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody uſurper, and to reſtore the poſſeſſion of the kingdom to the poſterity of the lawful prince; an undertaking worthy of the juſtice and heroiſm of the great Fingal. The action is one, and compleat. The poem opens with the deſcent of Fingal on the coaſt, and the conſultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince

Cormac, which was the cauſe of the war, being antecedent to the Epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an epiſode in the firſt book. In the progreſs of the poem, three battles are deſcribed, which riſe in their importance above one another; the ſucceſs is various, and the iſſue for ſome time doubtful; till at laſt, Fingal brought into diſtreſs, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his ſon Fillan, aſſumes the command himſelf, and having ſlain the Irish king in ſingle combat, reſtores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps leſs fire than the other Epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderneſs, and more magnificence. The regning idea, ſo often preſented to us of « Fingal in the laſt of his fields », is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble concluſion be thought of, than the aged hero, after ſo many ſucceſsful atchievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the ſolemnities of thoſe times, reſigning his ſpear to his ſon. The events are leſs crouded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly diſplayed; we are let into the tranſactions of both hoſts; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The ſtill pathetic, and the romantic ſcenery of ſeveral of the night adventures, ſo remarkably ſuited to

Oſſian's genius, occaſion a fine diverſity in the poem; and are happily contraſted with the military operations of the day.

In moſt of our author's poems, the horrors of war are ſoftened by intermixed ſcenes of love and friendſhip. In Fingal, theſe are introduced as epiſodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the moſt conſpicuous beauties of that poem. The diſtreſs of Sulmalla, diſguiſed and unknown among ſtrangers, her tender and anxious concern for the ſafety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he firſt diſcovers her, his ſtruggles to conceal and ſuppreſs his paſſion, leſt it ſhould unman him in the midſt of war, thought « his ſoul poured forth in ſecret, when he be» held her fearful eye »; and the laſt interview between them, when overcome by her tenderneſs, he lets her know he had diſcovered her, and confeſſes his paſſion; are all wrought up with the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility and delicacy.

Beſides the characters which appeared in Fingal, ſeveral new ones are here introduced; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheleſs diverſified in a ſenſible and ſtri-

king manner. Foldath, for inſtance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a ſavage chieftain: Bold, and daring, but preſumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is diſtinguished, on his firſt appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; « His ſtride is haughty; » his red eye rolls in wrath ». In his perſon and whole deportment, he his contraſted with the mild and wiſe Hidalla, another leader of the ſame army, on whoſe humanity and gentleneſs he looks with great contempt. He profeſſedly delights in ſtrife and blood. He inſults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counſels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his ſchemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral ſong to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghoſts, was in thoſe days conſidered as the greateſt barbarity. Fierce to the laſt, he comforts himſelf in his dying moments with thinking that his ghoſt ſhall often leave its blaſt to rejoice over the graves of thoſe he had ſlain. Yet Oſſian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, ſome tender circumſtances; by the moving deſcription of his daughter Dardulena, the laſt of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is

diſtinguiſhed by the moſt humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty; is famous for his hoſpitality to ſtrangers; open to every generous ſentiment and to every ſoft and compaſſionate feeling. He is ſo amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it ſo, as to make Cathmor himſelf indirectly acknowledge Fingal's ſuperiority, and to appear ſomewhat apprehenſive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew vould call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Oſſian has introduced into his poems three compleat heroes, Cuchullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, ſenſibly diſtinguiſhed each of their characters. Cuchullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wiſe and great, retaining an aſcendant peculiar to himſelf in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in Temora, and the one moſt highly finiſhed, is Fillan. His character is of that ſort, for which Oſſian ſhews a particular fondneſs; an eager, fervent young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthuſiaſm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had ſketched this in the deſcription of his own ſon Oſcar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is ſo con-

ſonant to the Epic ſtrain, though ſo far as I remember, not placed in ſuch a conſpicuous light by any other Epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Oſſian's management of it in this inſtance.

Fillan was the youngeſt of all the ſons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oſcar, by whoſe fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally ſuppoſe his ambition to have been highly ſtimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he his deſcribed as more rash and fiery. His firſt appearance is ſoon after Oſcar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a converſation with his brother Oſſian, on that occaſion, we learn that it was not long ſince he began to lift the ſpear. « Few » are the marks of my ſword in battle; but my » ſoul is fire ». He is with ſome difficulty reſtrained by Oſſian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him any opportunity of ſignalizing his valour. « The king hath not » remarked my ſword; I go forth with the croud; » I return without my fame ». Soon after, when Fingal, according to cuſtom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to command the army, and each was ſtanding forth, and putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is preſented in the following moſt picturesque and natural attitude. « On his

» ſpear ſtood the ſon of Clatho, in the wande-
» ring of his locks. Thrice he raiſed his eye
» to Fingal: his voice thrice failed him as he
» ſpoke. – Fillan could not boaſt of battles –
» at once he ſtrode away. Bent over a diſtant
» ſtream he ſtood; the tear hung in his eye. He
» ſtruck, at times, the thiſtle's head, with his
» inverted ſpear ». No leſs natural and beau-
tiful is the deſcription of Fingal's paternal emo-
tion on this occaſion. « Nor is he unſeen of Fin-
» gal. Side-long he beheld his ſon. He beheld
» him with burſting joy. He hid the big tear
» with his locks, and turned amidſt his crouded
» ſoul ». The command, for that day, being
given to Gaul, Fillan rushes amidſt the thickeſt
of the foe, ſaves Gaul's life, who is wound-
ed by a random arrow, and diſtinguishes him-
ſelf ſo in battle, that « the days of old return
» on Fingal's mind, as he beholds the renown
» of his ſon. As the ſun rejoices from the cloud,
» over the tree his beams have raiſed, whilſt it
» ſhakes its lonely head on the heath, ſo joyful
» is the king over Fillan ». Sedate however
and wiſe, he mixes the praiſe which he beſtows
on him with ſome reprehenſion of his rashneſs,
« My ſon, I ſaw thy deeds, and my ſoul was
» glad. Thou art brave, ſon of Clatho, but head-
» long in the ſtrife. So did not Fingal advance,
» though he never feared a foe. Let thy peo-

» ple be a ridge behind thee; they are thy » ſtrength in the field. Then ſhalt thou be long » renowned, and behold the tombs of thy » fathers ».

On the next day, the greateſt and the laſt of Fillan's life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the hoſt to battle. Fingal's ſpeech to his troops on this occaſion is full of noble ſentiment; and where he recommends his ſon to their care, extremely touching. « A young beam is before » you; few are his ſteps to war. They are few, » but he his valiant; defend my dark-haired ſon. » Bring him back with joy; hereafter he may ſtand » alone. His form is like his fathers; his ſoul is » a flame of their fire ». When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his ſtrength to deſcribe the exploits of the young hero; who, at laſt encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath the oppoſite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Oſſian, if any where, excells himſelf. Foldath being ſlain, and a general rout begun, there was no reſource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himſelf, who in this extremity deſcends from the hill, where, according to the cuſtom of thoſe princes, he ſurveyed the battle. Obſerve how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. « Wide ſpreading over echoing Lubar, the » flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung for-

» ward on their ſteps; and ſtrewed the heath with » dead. Fingal rejoiced over his ſon. –Blue-shiel- » ded Cathmor roſe. –Son of Alpin, bring the » harp! Give Fillan's praiſe to the wind; raiſe high » his praiſe in my hall, while yet he ſhines in » war. Leave, blue-eyed Clatho! leave thy hall! » behold that early beam of thine! The hoſt is » withered in its courſe. No farther look–it is » dark–light trembling from the harp, ſtrike, » virgins! ſtrike the ſound ». The ſudden in- terruption, and ſuſpenſe of the narration on Cath- mor's riſing from his hill, the abrupt burſting into the praiſe of Fillan, and the paſſionnate apoſtrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poe- tical art, in order to intereſt us in Fillan's danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediately following ſimile, one of the moſt magnificent and ſublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which, if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent ſubject of admiration to critics; « Fillan is like a ſpirit of heaven, that deſcends » from the skirt of his blaſt. The troubled ocean » feels his ſteps, as he ſtrides from wave to wave. » His path kindles behind him; iſlands shake » their heads on the heaving ſeas ».

But the poet's art is not yet exhauſted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or in Oſſian's ſtile, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too intereſting and affecting. Our at-

tention is naturally drawn towards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the riſing of Cathmor, and the danger of his ſon. But what ſhall he do? « Shall » Fingal riſe to his aid, and take the ſword of » Luno? What then ſhould become of thy fame, » ſon of white-boſomed Clatho? Turn not thine » eyes from Fingal, daughter of Iniſtore! I ſhall » not quench thy early beam. —No cloud of mine » ſhall riſe, my ſon, upon thy ſoul of fire ». Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the ſafety of his ſon, he witdraws from the ſight of the engagement; and diſpatches Oſſian in haſte to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction. « Father of Oſcar! » addreſſing him by a title which on this occaſion has the higheſt propriety. « Father of Oſcar! lift the » ſpear; defend the young in arms. But conceal » thy ſteps from Fillan's eyes: He muſt not know » that I doubt his ſteel ». —Oſſian arrived too late. —But unwilling to deſcribe Fillan vanquished, the poet ſuppreſſes all the circumſtances of the combat with Cathmor; and only shews us the dying hero. We ſee him animated to the end with the ſame martial and ardent ſpirit; breathing his laſt in bitter regret for being ſo early cut off from the field of glory. « Oſſian, lay me in that » hollow rock. Raiſe no ſtone above me; leaſt » one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in » the firſt of my fields; fallen vithout renown.

» Let thy voice alone, ſend joy to my flying ſoul. » Why ſhould the Bard know where dwells the » early-fallen Fillan » ? – He who after tracing the circumſtances of this ſtory, ſhall deny that our Bard is poſſeſſed of high ſentiment and high art, muſt be ſtrangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the ſtory of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a ſimilar kind; and after all the praiſe he may juſtly beſtow on the elegant and finished deſcription of that amiable author, let him ſay, which of the two poets unfold moſt of the human ſoul. – I wave inſiſting on any more of the particulars in Temora; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and ſpirit of Oſſian's poetry, than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art diſcovered in conducting works of ſuch length as Fingal and Temora, diſtinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The ſmaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no leſs eminent. They are hiſtorical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly diſcover themſelves to be the work of the ſame author. One conſiſtent face of manners is every where preſented to us; one ſpirit of poetry reigns; the maſterly hand of Oſſian appears throughout; the ſame rapid and animated ſtyle; the ſame ſtrong colouring of imagination, and the ſame glowing ſenſibility of heart. Beſides the unity which belongs to the compoſition of one man,

there is moreover a certain unity of ſubject which very happily connects all theſe poems. They form the poetical hiſtory of the age of Fingal. The ſame race of heroes, whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuchullin, Oſcar, Connal and Gaul return again upon the ſtage; and Fingal himſelf is always the principal figure, preſented on every occaſion, with equal magnificence, nay riſing upon us to the laſt. The circumſtances of Oſſian's old age and blindneſs, his ſurviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Malvina, the ſpouſe or miſtreſs of his beloved ſon Oſcar, furnish the fineſt poetical ſituations that fancy could deviſe for that tender pathetic which reigns in Oſſian's poetry.

On each of theſe poems, there might be room for ſeparate obſervations, with regard to the conduct and diſpoſition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the deſcriptions and ſentiments. Carthon is a regular and higly finished piece. The main ſtory is very properly introduced by Cleſſammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's ſong of mourning over Moina; in which Oſſian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to diſtinguish him, for being an eminent poet, as well as warrior. Fingal's ſong upon this occaſion, when « his thouſand Bards leaned for-» wards from their ſeats, to hear the voice of

» the King», is inferior to no paſſage in the whole book; and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the ſerioufneſs, no leſs than the ſublimity of the ſtrain, is peculiarly ſuited to the Hero's character. In Darthula, are aſſembled almoſt all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, ſons, and brothers, the diſtreſs of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful addreſs to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the tranſition from thence to the ſubject, moſt happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The ſtory is regular, dramatic, intereſting to the laſt. He who can read it without emotion may congratulate himſelf, if he pleaſes, upon being completely armed againſt ſympathetic ſorrow. As Fingal had no occaſion of appearing in the action of this poem, Oſſian makes a very artful tranſition from his narration, to what was paſſing in the halls of Selma. The ſound heard there on the ſtrings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghoſts of their fathers, to receive the Heroes falling in a diſtant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increaſe the ſolemnity, and to diverſify the ſcenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the moſt ſublime dignity; and has this advantage of being more chearful in

the ſubject, and more happy in the cataſtrophe than moſt of the other poems: Though tempered at the ſame time with epiſodes in that ſtrain of tender melancholy, which ſeems to have been the great delight of Oſſian and the Bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly diſtinguished, by high generoſity of ſentiment. This is carried ſo far, particularly in the refuſal of Gaul, on one ſide, to take the advantage of a ſleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recall into one's mind the manners of Chivalry; ſome reſſemblance to which may perhaps be ſuggeſted by other incidents in this collection of Poems. Chivalry, however, took riſe in an age and country too remote from thoſe of Oſſian, to admit the ſuſpicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as Chivalry had any real exiſtence, the ſame military enthuſiaſm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Oſſian, that is, in the infancy of a riſing ſtate, through the operation of the ſame cauſe, very naturally produce effects of the ſame kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as Chivalry was an ideal ſyſtem exiſting only in romance, it will not be thought ſurpriſing, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic Bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners ſhould be found among them, as much, at leaſt,

as among the *Trobadores* or ſtrolling Provençal Bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whoſe ſongs, it is ſaid, firſt gave riſe to thoſe romantic ideas of heroiſm, which for ſo long a time enchanted Europe * Oſſian's heroes have all the gallantry and generoſity of thoſe fabulous knights without their extravagance; and his love ſcenes have native tenderneſs, without any mixture of thoſe forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which reſemble the moſt thoſe of romances, concern women who follow their lovers to war diſguiſed in the armour of men; and theſe are ſo managed as to produce, in the diſcovery, ſeveral of the moſt intereſting ſituations; one beautiful inſtance of which may be ſeen in Carric-thura and another in Calthon and Colmal.

Oithona preſents a ſituation of a different nature. In the abſence of her lover Gaul, she had been carried off and ravished by Dunrommath. Gaul diſcovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the ſentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occaſion, are deſcribed with ſuch tender and exquiſite propriety, as does the greateſt honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author: and would have been ad-

* Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum Romanenſium.

mired in any poet of the moſt refined age. The conduct of Croma muſt ſtrike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the ſucceeding poem. She is therefore introduced in perſon; « she has heard a voice » in a dream; she feels the fluttering of her » ſoul »; and in a moſt moving lamentation addreſſed to her beloved Oſcar; she ſings her own death ſong. Nothing could be calculated with more art to ſooth and comfort her, than the ſtory which Oſſian relates. In the young and brave Fovargormo, another Oſcar is introduced; his praiſes are ſung; and the happineſs is ſet before her of thoſe who die in their youth, « when » their renown is around them; before the fee- » ble behold them in the hall, and ſmile at their » trembling hands ».

But no where does Oſſian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the concluſion of his ſongs, « The laſt » ſound of the Voice of Cona ».

> Qualis olor noto poſiturus littore vitam,
> Ingemit, et mæſtis mulcens concentibus auras
> Præſago queritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably ſuited to the ſubject. Every thing is full of that inviſible world, into which the aged Bard believes himſelf now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal

preſents itſelf to his view; « he ſees the cloud » that ſhall receive his ghoſt; he beholds the » miſt that ſhall form his robe when he appears » on his hill »; and all the natural objects around him ſeem to carry the preſages of death. « The » thiſtle ſhakes its beard to the wind. The flower » hangs its heavy head–it ſeems to ſay, I am » covered with the drops of heaven; the time » of my departure is near, and the blaſt that » ſhall ſcatter my leaves ». Malvina's death is hinted to him in the moſt delicate manner by the ſon of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheoſis, or aſcent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the ſtory which follows from the mention which Oſſian ſuppoſes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. « And doſt thou remember Oſſian, O Toſcar ſon » of Comloch? The battles of our youth were » many; our ſwords went together to the field ». – Nothing could be more proper than to end his ſongs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now ſo full; and who, from firſt to laſt, had been ſuch a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The ſcene of moſt of Oſſians poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coaſt of Ireland oppoſite to the territories of Fingal. When the ſcene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from

thoſe of Oſſian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, cuſtoms, and religion of both nations were the ſame. They had been ſeparated from one another by migration, only a few generations, as it should ſeem, before our poets age; and they ſtill maintained a cloſe and frequent intercourſe. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coaſt, or to the iſlands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sulmalla of Lumon, and Cathloda, the caſe is quitte altered. Thoſe countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic deſcent, who in their manners and religious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Oſſian. His deſcriptions bear the native marks of one who was preſent in the expeditions which he relates, and who deſcribes what he had ſeen with his own eyes. No ſooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the iſlands of Iniſtore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the ſtones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divination and inchantments, for which it is well known thoſe northern nations were early fa-

mous. « There, mixed with the murmur of wa-
» ters, roſe the voice of aged men, who called
» the forms of night to aid them in their war »;
whilſt the Caledonian chiefs who aſſiſted them,
are deſcribed as ſtanding at a diſtance, heedleſs
of their rites. That ferocity of manners which
diſtinguiſhed thoſe nations, alſo becomes conſ-
picuous. In the combats of their chiefs there
is a peculiar ſavageneſs; even their women are
bloody and fierce. The ſpirit, and the very
ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern Scalder
whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again.
« The hawks », Oſſian makes one of the Scan-
dinavian chiefs ſay, « rush from all their winds;
» they are wont to trace my courſe. – We re-
» joiced three days above the dead, and called
» the hawks of heaven. They came from all
» their winds, to feaſt on the foes of Annir ».

Diſmiſſing now the ſeparate conſideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make ſome obſervations on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Deſcription, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always diſtinguiſhed by his talent for deſcription *. A ſecond rate writer diſcerns nothing new or peculiar in

* See the rules of poetical deſcription excellently illuſtrated by lord Kaims, in his Elements of Criticiſm, vol. iii. chap. 21. Of narration and deſcription.

the object he means to deſcribe. His conceptions of it are vague and looſe; his expreſſions feeble; and of courſe the object is preſented to us indiſtinctly and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we ſee it before our eyes: he catches the diſtinguiſhing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in ſuch a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which firſt receives a ſtrong impreſſion of the object; and then, by a proper ſelection of capital picturesque circumſtances employed in deſcribing it, tranſmits that impreſſion in its full force to the imaginations of others.

That Oſſian poſſeſſes this deſcriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his deſcriptions produce upon the imaginations of thoſe who read him with any degree of attention and taſte. Few poets are more intereſting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country become familiar; we even think we could draw the figure of his ghoſts: In a word, whilſt reading him, we are tranſported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects, as if they were all real.

It were eaſy to point out ſeveral inſtances of exquiſite painting in the works of our author. Such, for inſtance, as the ſcenery with which

Temora opens, and the attitude in which Cairbar is there preſented to us; the deſcription of the young prince Cormac, in the ſame book; and the ruins of Balclutha in Carthon. « I have » ſeen the walls of Balclutha, but they were » deſolate. The fire had reſounded in the halls; » and the voice of the people is heard no more. » The ſtream of Clutha was removed from its » place by the fall of the walls. The thiſtle » ſhook there its lonely head. The moſs whiſtled » to the wind. The fox looked out from the » windows. The rank graſs of the wall waved » round his head. Deſolate is the dwelling of » Moina; ſilence is in the houſe of her fathers ». Nothing alſo can be more natural and lively than the manner in which Carthon afterwards deſcribes how the conflagration of his city affected him, when a child: « Have I not ſeen the fallen » Balclutha? And ſhall I feaſt with Comhal's ſon? » Comhal! who threw his fire in the midſt of » my father's hall! I was young, and knew not » the cauſe why the virgins wept. The columns » of ſmoke pleaſed mine eye, when they roſe » above my walls: I often looked back with » gladneſs, when my friends fled above the hill. » But when the years of my youth came on, » I beheld the moſs of my fallen walls. My ſigh » aroſe with the morning; and my tears deſcen- » ded with night. Shall I not fight, I ſaid to

» my ſoul, againſt the children of my foes? » And I will fight, O Bard! I feel the ſtrength » of my ſoul ». In the ſame poem, the aſſembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who had been warned of ſome impending danger by the appearance of a prodigy, is deſcribed with ſo many pictureſque circumſtances, that one imagines himſelf preſent in the aſſembly. « The king alone » beheld the terrible ſight, and he foreſaw the » death of his people. He came in ſilence to his » hall, and took his father's ſpear; the mail » rattled on his breaſt. The heroes roſe around. » They looked in ſilence on each other, mar- » king the eyes of Fingal. They ſaw the battle » in his face. – A thouſand ſhields are placed at » once on their arms; and they drew a thou- » ſand ſwords. The hall of Selma brightened » around. The clang of arms aſcends. The grey » dogs howl in their place. No word is among » the mighty chiefs. Each marked the eyes of » the King; and half aſſumed his ſpear ».

It has been objected to Oſſian, that his deſcriptions of military actions are imperfect, and much leſs diverſified by circumſtances than thoſe of Homer. This is in ſome meaſure true. The amazing fertility of Homer's invention is no where ſo much diſplayed, as in the incidents of his battles, and in the little hiſtory pieces he gives of the perſons ſlain. Nor indeed, with regard

to

to the talent of deſcription, can too much be ſaid in praiſe of Homer. Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with which he paints are thoſe of nature. But Oſſian's genius was of a different kind from Homer's. It led him to hurry towards grand objects rather than to amuſe himſelf with particulars of leſs importance. He could dwell on the death of a favorite hero: but that of a private man ſeldom ſtopped his rapid courſe. Homer's genius was more comprehenſive than Oſſian's. It included a wider circle of objects; and could work up any incident into deſcription. Oſſian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itſelf was the higheſt of all, the region of the pathetic and ſublime.

We muſt not imagine, however, that Oſſian's battles conſiſt only of general indiſtinct deſcription. Such beautiful incidents are ſometimes introduced, and the circumſtances of the perſons ſlain ſo much diverſified, as ſhow that he could have embellished his military ſcenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. One man « is ſtretched in » the duſt of his native land; he fell, where often he had ſpread the feaſt, and often raiſed the » voice of the harp». The maid of Iniſtore is introduced, in a moving apoſtrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, « as, rolled in the duſt, he

» lifted his faint eyes to the king » , is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is ſlain by night, is heard « hiſſing on » the half extinguished oak », which had been kindled for giving light. Another, climbing a tree to eſcape from his foe, is pierced by his ſpear from behind; « ſhrieking, panting he fell, » whilſt moſs and withered branches purſue his » fall, and ſtrew the blue arms of Gaul ». Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: « I » ſaw Gaul in his armour, and my ſoul was mixed » with his: For the fire of the battle was in his » eyes; he looked to the foe with joy. We ſpoke » the words of friendship in ſecret; and the lightning of our ſwords poured together. We » drew them behind the wood, and tried the » ſtrength of our arms on the empty air ».

Oſſian is alvays conciſe in his deſcriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great miſtake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended ſtyle, is of advantage to deſcription. On the contrary, ſuch a diffuſe manner for the moſt part weakens it. Any one redundant circumſtance is a nuiſance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indiſtinct. « Obſtat », as Quintilian ſays with regard to ſtyle, « quicquid non adjuvat ».

To be conciſe in deſcription, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No deſcription that reſts in generals can poſſibly be good; it can convey no lively idea; for it is of particulars only that we have a diſtinct conception. But at the ſame time, no ſtrong imagination dwells long upon any one particular; or heaps together a maſs of trivial ones. By the happy choice of ſome one, or of a few that are the moſt ſtriking, it preſents the image more compleat, shows us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do, by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all proſe writers the moſt conciſe. He has even a degree of abruptneſs reſembling our author: Yet no writer is more eminent for lively deſcription. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, propoſes to diſmiſs him with honour: « Raiſe to-» morrow thy white ſails to the wind, thou » brother of Agandecca »! he conveys, by thus addreſſing his enemy, a ſtronger impreſſion of the emotions then paſſing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been ſpent in deſcribing the conflict between reſentment againſt Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the moſt full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words: « His shield is marked with » the ſtrokes of battle; his red eye deſpiſes dan-

» ger ». When Oſcar, left alone, was ſurrounded by foes, « he ſtood », it is ſaid, « growing » in his place, like the flood of the narrow va» le »; a happy repreſentation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midſt of danger, ſeems to increaſe in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the ſudden riſing of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumſtances of domeſtic ſorrow occaſioned by a young warrior's firſt going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by theſe words; « Calmar lea» ned on his father's ſpear; that ſpear which he » brought from Lara's hall, when the ſoul of his » mother was ſad ».

The conciſeneſs of Oſſian's deſcriptions is the more proper on account of his ſubjects. Deſcriptions of gay and ſmiling ſcenes may, without any diſadvantage, be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in theſe. The deſcription may be weakened by being diffuſe, yet notwithſtanding, may be beautiful ſtill. Whereas, with reſpect to grand, ſolemn and pathetic ſubjects, which are Oſſian's chief field, the caſe is very different. In theſe energy is above all things required. The imagination muſt be ſeized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impreſſed by one ſtrong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteneſs of laboured illuſtration.

But Oſſian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the ſublime and pathetic, was not confined to it: In ſubjects alſo of grace an delicacy, he diſcovers the hand of a maſter. Take for an example the following elegant deſcription of Agandecca, wherein the tenderneſs of Tibullus ſeems united with the majeſty of Virgil. « The Daugh-» ter of the ſnow overheard, and left the hall of » her ſecret ſigh. She came in all her beauty; » like the moon from the cloud of the Eaſt. Love-» lineſs was around her as light. Her ſteps were » like the muſic of ſongs. She ſaw the youth » and loved him. He was the ſtolen ſigh of her » ſoul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in ſecret; » And she bleſt the chief of Morven ». Several other inſtances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendship painted by our author with a moſt natural and happy delicacy.

The ſimplicity of Oſſian's manner adds great beauty to his deſcriptions, and indeed to his whole Poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refinement; no marks either in ſtyle or thought of a ſtudied endeavour to shine and ſparkle. Oſſian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings; and to ſpeak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one inſtance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his works. It is in the firſt book of Fingal, where, from the tombs of

two lovers, two lonely yews are mentioned to have ſprung, « whoſe branches wished to meet » on high ». This ſympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit; and it is ſomewhat curious to find this ſingle inſtance of that ſort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The « joy of grief », is one Oſſian's remarkable expreſſions, ſeveral times repeated. If any one ſhall think that it needs to be juſtified by a precedent, he may find it twice uſed by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is viſited by the ghoſt of Patroclus; and in the Odyſſey, when Ulyſſes meets his mother in the ſhades. On both theſe occaſions, the heroes, melted with tenderneſs, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghoſt, « that we might », ſay they, « in a mutual embrace, enjoy the delight of grief »,

— χρυεροῖο τεταρπώμεσθα γόοιο *.

But in truth the expreſſion ſtands in need of no defence from authority; for it is a natural and juſt expreſſion; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Oſſian makes a very proper diſtinction between this gratification, and the deſtructive effect of overpowering grief. « There is a joy in grief, when

* Odyſſ. 11. 211. Iliad 23. 98.

» peace dwells in the breasts of the sad. But » sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of » Toscar, and their days are few ». To « give » the joy of grief », generally signifies to raise the strain of soft and grave musick; and finely characterises the taste of Ossian's age and country. In those days, when the songs of Bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour; gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme; preferably to that light and trifling strain of poetry and music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. » Strike the harp in my hall », said the great Fingal, in the midst of youth and victory, « Strike » the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song. » Pleasant is the joy of grief! It is like the shower » of spring, when it softens the branch of the » oak; and the young leaf lifts its green head. » Sing on, O Bards! To-morrow we lift the » sail ».

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages; and when well chosen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and animated. Besides epithets founded on bodily distinctions, akin to many of Homer's, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future fights, Fin-

gal of the mildeſt look, Carril of other times, the mildly blushing Evirallin; Bragela, the lonely ſun-beam of Dunſcaich; a Culdee, the ſon of the ſecret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in deſcriptive poetry, compariſons or ſimiles are the moſt ſplendid. Theſe chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem: And as they abound ſo much in the works of Oſſian, and are commonly among the favourite paſſages of all poets, it may be expected that I ſhould be ſomewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical ſimile always ſuppoſes two objects brought together, between which there is ſome near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be preciſely defined. For various, almoſt numberleſs, are the analogies formed among objects, by a ſprightly imagination. The relation of actual ſimilitude, or likeneſs of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical compariſon. Sometimes a reſemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: Sometimes a reſſemblance in one diſtinguiſhing property or circumſtance. Very often two objects are brought together in a ſimile, though they reſemble one another, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in nothing, only becauſe they raiſe in the mind a train of ſimilar, and what may be called, concordant ideas; ſo that

the remembrance of the one, when recalled, ſerves to quicken and heighten the impreſſion made by the other. Thus, to give an inſtance from our poet, the pleaſure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth, has certainly no direct reſemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Oſſian has founded upon this, one of the moſt beautiful compariſons that is to be met with in any poet. « Wilt thou not liſten, ſon of the rock, to the ſong » of Oſſian? My ſoul is full of other times; the » joy of my youth returns. Thus, the ſun appears » in the weſt, after the ſteps of his brightneſs » have moved behind a ſtorm. The green hills » lift their dewy heads. The blue ſtreams rejoice » in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on his » ſtaff; and his grey hair glitters in the beam ». Never was there a finer group of objects. It raiſes a ſtrong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by diſplaying a ſcene, which produces in every ſpectator a correſponding train of pleaſing emotions; the declining ſun looking forth in his brightneſs after a ſtorm; the chearful face of all nature; and the ſtill life finely animated by the circumſtance of the aged hero, with his ſtaff and his grey locks; a circumſtance both extremely pictureſque in itſelf, and peculiarly ſuited to the main object of the compariſon. Such analogies

and aſſociations of ideas as theſe, are highly pleaſing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diverſify the ſcene; they aggrandize the ſubject; they keep the imagination awake and ſprightly. For as the judgment is principally exerciſed in diſtinguishing objects, and remarking the differences among thoſe which ſeem like; ſo the higheſt amuſement of the imagination is to trace likeneſſes and agreements among thoſe which ſeem different.

The principal rules which reſpect poetical compariſons are, that they be introduced on proper occaſions, when the mind is diſpoſed to relish them; and not in the midſt of ſome ſevere and agitating paſſion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a reſemblance neither too near and obvious, ſo as to give little amuſement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, ſo as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they ſerve either to illuſtrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and diſtinct; or at leaſt, to heighten and embellish it, by a ſuitable aſſociation of images *.

Every country has a ſcenery peculiar to itſelf; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his alluſions will of courſe be taken from thoſe objects which he

* See Elements of Criticiſm, ch. 19. vol. 3.

ſees around him, and which have often ſtruck his fancy. For this reaſon, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in ſome meaſure, acquainted with the natural hiſtory of the country where the ſcene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence ſo many Lions, and Tygers, and Eagles and Serpents, which we meet with in the ſimiles of modern poets; as if theſe animals had acquired ſome right to a place in poetical compariſons for ever, becauſe employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are abſurdly uſed for illuſtration by us, who know them only at ſecond hand, or by deſcription. To moſt readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpoſe to deſcribe Lions or Tygers by ſimiles taken from men, than to compare men to Lions. Oſſian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature, which he ſaw before his eyes; and by conſequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian ſcenery; but with the miſts, and clouds, and ſtorms of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in ſimiles than Oſſian. There are in this collection as many, at leaſt,

as in the whole Iliad and Odyſſey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are ſparkling ornaments; and like all things that ſparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their luſtre. But if Oſſian's ſimiles be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly ſhorther than Homer's; they interrupt his narration leſs; he juſt glances aſide to ſome reſembling object, and inſtantly returns to his former track. Homer's ſimiles include a wider range of objects. But in return, Oſſian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be ſaid for all thoſe which Homer employs. The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, Clouds and Meteors, Lightning and Thunder, Seas and Whales, Rivers, Torrents, Winds, Ice, Rain, Snow, Dews, Miſt, Fire and Smoke, Trees and Foreſts, Heath and Graſs and Flowers, Rocks and Mountains, Muſic and Songs, Light and Darkneſs, Spirits and Ghoſts; theſe form the circle, within which Oſſian's compariſons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from Birds and Beaſts; as Eagles, Sea Fowl, the Horſe, the Deer, and the Mountain Bee; and a very few from ſuch operations of art as were then known. Homer has diverſified his imagery by many more alluſions to the animal world; to Lions, Bulls, Goats, Herds of Cattle, Ser-

pents, Inſects; and to the various occupations of rural and paſtoral life. Oſſian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the deſert, uncultivated ſtate of his country, which ſuggeſted to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudeſt form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was ſlender, as they were little ſubjected to the uſes of man.

The great objection made to Oſſian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the ſame compariſons. In a work ſo thick ſown with ſimiles, one could not but expect to find images of the ſame kind ſometimes ſuggeſted to the poet by reſembling objects; eſpecially to a poet like Oſſian, who wrote from the immediate impulſe of poetical enthuſiaſm, and without much preparation of ſtudy or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know often his Lions and Bulls and Flocks of Sheep, recur with little or no variation; nay, ſometimes in the very ſame words? The objection made to Oſſian is, however, founded, in a great meaſure, upon a miſtake. It has been ſuppoſed by inattentive readers, that wherever the Moon, the Cloud, or the Thunder, returns in a ſimile, it is the ſame ſimile, and the ſame Moon, or Cloud, or Thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whe-

reas very often the ſimiles are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in ſubſtance the ſame; but the image is new; for the appearance of the object is changed, it is preſented to the fancy in another attitude; and cloathed with new circumſtances, to make it ſuit the different illuſtration for which it is employed. In this, lies Oſſian's great art; in ſo happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correſpond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one inſtance the Moon, which is very frequently introduced into his compariſons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the Moon is a greater object of attention, than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diverſified its appearance. The ſhield of a warrior is like « the » darkened moon when it moves a dun circle » through the heavens ». The face of a ghoſt, wan and pale, is like « the beam of the ſetting » moon ». And a different appearance of a ghoſt, thin and indiſtinct, is like « the new moon » ſeen through the gathered miſt, when the ſky » pours down its flaky ſnow, and the world is » ſilent and dark »; or in a different form ſtill, it is like « the watry beam of the moon, when » it ruſhes from between two clouds, and the

» midnight ſhower is on the field ». A very oppoſite uſe is made of the moon in the deſcription of Agandecca: « She came in all her beau» ty, like the moon from the cloud of the Eaſt ». Hope, ſucceeded by diſappointment, is « joy » riſing on her face, and ſorrow returning again, » like a thin cloud on the moon ». But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheared by Fingal's generoſity, « His face brightened like the full » moon of heaven, when the clouds vaniſh » away, and leave her calm and broad in the » midſt of the ſky ». Venvela is « bright as » the moon, when it trembles o'er the weſtern » wave »; but the ſoul of guilty Uthal is « dark as the troubled face of the moon, when » it foretels the ſtorm ». And by a very fanciful and uncommon alluſion, it is ſaid of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, « Nor » long ſhalt thou lift the ſpear, mildly ſhining » beam of youth! Death ſtands dim behind thee, » like the darkened half of the moon behind its » growing light ».

Another inſtance of the ſame nature may be taken from miſt, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Oſſian, he applies to a variety of purpoſes, and purſues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object,

The hair of Morna is « like the miſt of Cromla, » when it curls on the rock, and ſhines to the » beam of the weſt ». – « The ſong comes with its » muſick to melt and pleaſe the ear. It is like ſoft » miſt, that riſing from a lake pours on the ſilent va- » le. The green flowers are filled with dew. The » ſun returns in its ſtrength, and the miſt is go- » ne* ».–But, for the moſt part, miſt is employed as a ſimilitude of ſome diſagreeable or terrible object. « The ſoul of Nathos was ſad, like the ſun in » the day of miſt, when his face is watery and » dim ». The darkneſs of old age comes like a « the miſt of the deſert ». The face of a ghoſt is « pale as the miſt of Cromla ». « The gloom » of battle is rolled along, as miſt that is poured » on the valley, when ſtorms invade the ſilent » ſun-ſhine of heaven ». Fame ſuddenly depar- ting, is likened to « miſt that flies away before

* There is a remarkable propriety in this compariſon. It is intended to explain the effect of ſoft and mournful muſick. Armin appears diſturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor ſays to him, « Why burſts the ſigh of » Armin ? Is there a cauſe to mourn ? The ſong comes » with its muſick to melt and pleaſe the ear. It is like ſoft » miſt, &c. » that is, ſuch mournful ſongs have a happy effect to ſoften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moiſture of the miſt refreshes and nou- riſhes the flowers; whilſt the ſadneſs they occaſion is only tranſient, and ſoon diſpelled by the ſucceeding occupations and amuſements of life: « The ſun returns in its ſtrength, » and the miſt is gone ».

» the ruſtling wind of the vale ». A ghoſt, ſlowly vaniſhing, to « miſt that melts by degrees » on the ſunny hill ». Cairbar, after his treacherous aſſaſſination of Oſcar, is compared to a peſtilential fog. « I love a foe like Cathmor », ſays Fingal, « his ſoul is great; his arm is ſtrong; » his battles are full of fame. But the little ſoul » is like a vapour that hovers round the marshy » lake. It never riſes on the green hill, leſt the » winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave; » and it ſends forth the dart of death ». This is a ſimile highly finiſhed. But there is another which is ſtill more ſtriking, founded alſo on miſt, in the 4th book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interpoſes, rebukes and ſilences them. The poet intends to give us the higheſt idea of Cathmor's ſuperiority; and moſt effectually accompliſhes his intention by the following happy image. « They ſunk from » the king on either ſide; like two columns of » morning miſt, when the ſun riſes between » them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their » rolling on either ſide; each towards its reedy » pool ». Theſe inſtances may ſufficiently ſhew with what richneſs of imagination Oſſian's compariſons abound, and at the ſame time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it muſt be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is uſual to judge of poets from a compariſon of their ſimiles more than of other paſſages, it will perhaps be agreable to the reader, to ſee how Homer and Oſſian have conducted ſome images of the ſame kind. This might be ſhewn in many inſtances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general ſtore-houſe of all imagery, the ground work of their compariſons muſt of courſe be frequently the ſame. I ſhall ſelect only a few of the moſt conſiderable from both poets. M. Pope's tranſlation of Homer can be of no uſe to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between proſe, and the impoſing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the ſimplicity of a proſe tranſlation, that we can form any compariſon between the two Bards.

The ſhock of two encountering armies, the noiſe and the tumult of battle, afford one of the moſt grand and awful ſubjects of deſcription; on which all Epic poets have exerted their ſtrength. Let us firſt hear Homer. The following deſcription is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the ſame words *. « When now the conflic-» ting hoſts joined in the field of battle, then » were mutually oppoſed ſhields, and ſwords, » and the ſtrength of armed men. The boſſy buc-

* Iliad iv. 446. and Iliad viii. 60.

» klers were dashed againſt each other. The uni-
» verſal tumult roſe. There were mingled the
» triumphant ſhouts and the dying groans of the
» victors and the vanquished. The earth ſtreamed
» with blood. As when winter torrents, rushing
» from the mountains, pour into a narrow valley,
» their violent waters. They iſſue from a thou-
» ſand ſprings, and mix in the hollowed channel.
» The diſtant shepherd hears on the mountain,
» their roar from afar. Such was the terror and
» the shout of the engaging armies ». In another paſſage, the poet, much in the manner of Oſſian, heaps ſimile on ſimile, to expreſs the vaſtneſs of the idea, with which his imagination ſeems to labour. « With a mighty shout the hoſts engage.
» Not ſo loud roars the wave of ocean, when
» driven againſt the shore by the whole force of
» the boiſterous north; not ſo loud in the woods
» of the mountain, the noiſe of the flame, when
» riſing in its fury to conſume the foreſt; not ſo
» loud the wind among the lofty oaks, when the
» wrath of the ſtorm rages; as was the clamour
» of the Greeks and Trojans, when, roaring ter-
» rible, they rushed againſt each other * ».

To theſe deſcriptions and ſimiles, we may oppoſe the following from Oſſian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the ſame kind employed; commonly leſs ex-

* Iliad xiv. 393.

tended; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characteriſes our poet. « As autumn's dark » ſtorms pour from two echoing hills, towards » each other, approached the heroes. As two » dark ſtreams from high rocks meet, and mix, » and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark » in battle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mix- » ed his ſtrokes with chief, and man with man. » Steel clanging, ſounded on ſteel. Helmets are » cleft on high; blood burſts and ſmoaks around. – » As the troubled noiſe of the ocean, when roll » the waves on high; as the laſt peal of the thun- » der of heaven, ſuch is the noiſe of battle. – » As roll a thouſand waves to the rock, ſo Swa- » ran's hoſt came on; as meets a rock a thouſand » waves, ſo Inisfail met Swaran. Death raiſes all » his voices around, and mixes with the ſound » of ſhields.–The field echoes from wing to wing, » as a hundred hammers that riſe by turns on the » red ſon of the furnace. – As a hundred winds » on Morven; as the ſtreams of a hundred hills; » as clouds fly ſucceſſive over heaven; or as » the dark ocean aſſaults the ſhore of the de- » ſart; ſo roaring, ſo vaſt, ſo terrible, the armies » mixed on Lena's echoing heath ». In ſeveral of theſe images, there is a remarkable ſimilarity to Homer's; but what follows is ſuperior to any compariſon that Homer uſes on this ſubject. « The » groan of the people ſpread over the hills; it

» was like the thunder of night, when the cloud » burſts on Cona; and a thouſand ghoſts shriek at » once on the hollow wind ». Never was an image of more awful ſublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. « As when a shepherd » , ſays Homer, « beholds » from the rock a cloud borne along the ſea by » the weſtern wind; black as pitch it appears from » afar, ſailing over the ocean, and carrying the » dreadful ſtorm. He shrinks at the ſight, and » drives his flock into the cave: Such, under the » Ajaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened » phalanx to the war *». – « They came, » ſays Oſſian, « over the deſert like ſtormy clouds, » when the winds roll them over the heath; their » edges are tinged with lightning; and the e- » choing groves foreſee the ſtorm ». The edges of the cloud tinged with lightning, is a ſublime idea; but the shepherd and his flock, render Homer's ſimile more pictureſque. This is frequently the difference between the two poets. Oſſian gives no more than the main image, ſtrong and full. Homer adds circumſtances and appendages, which amuſe the fancy by enlivening the ſcenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to « clouds that are ſettled on the moun-

* Iliad iv. 275.

» tain top, in the day of calmneſs, when the » ſtrength of the north wind ſleeps * ». Oſſian, with full as much propriety, compares the appearance of a diſordered army, to « the mountain » cloud, when the blaſt hath entered its womb; » and ſcatters the curling gloom on every ſide ». Oſſian's clouds aſſume a great many forms; and, as we might expect from his climate, are a fertile ſource of imagery to him. « The warriors follo- » wed their chiefs, like the gathering of the rainy » clouds, behind the red meteors of heaven ». An army retreating without coming to action, is likened to « clouds, that having long threatened » rain, retire ſlowly behind the hills ». The picture of Oithona, after she had determined to die, is lively and delicate. « Her ſoul was reſol- » ved, and the tear was dried from her wildly- » looking eye. A troubled joy roſe on her mind, » like the red path of the lightning on a ſtormy » cloud ». The image alſo of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in ſilence, the aſſaſſination of Oſcar, until the moment came when his deſigns were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and complete in all its parts. « Cairbar heard their » words in ſilence, like the cloud of a ſhower; » it ſtands dark on Cromla, till the lightning » burſts its ſide. The valley gleams with red light; » the ſpirits of the ſtorm rejoice. So ſtood the

* Iliad v. 522.

» ſilent king of Temora; at length his words are » heard ».

Homer's compariſon of Achilles to the Dog-Star, is very ſublime. « Priam beheld him rush- » ing along the plain, ſhining in his armour, like » the ſtar of autumn; bright are its beams, diſ- » tinguished amidſt the multitude of ſtars in the » dark hour of night. It riſes in its ſplendor; but » its ſplendor is fatal; betokening to miſerable » men, the deſtroying heat * ». The firſt appea- rance of Fingal, is, in like manner, compared by Oſſian, to a ſtar or meteor. « Fingal, tall in his » ship, ſtretched his bright lance before him. » Terrible was the gleam of his ſteel; it was like » the green meteor of death, ſetting in the heath » of Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and » the broad moon is darkened in heaven ». The hero's appearance in Homer, is more magnificent; in Oſſian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a ſtorm, is a ſimilitude frequent among poets for deſcribing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the moſt beautiful, by far, of his com- pariſons, founded on this object, indeed one of the moſt beautiful in the whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. « As the young and ver- » dant olive, which a man hath reared with care » in a lonely field, where the ſprings of water

* Iliad xxii. 26.

» bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; » it is fanned by the breath of all the winds, and » loaded with white bloſſoms; when the ſudden » blaſt of a wirlwind deſcending, roots it out » from its bed, and ſtretches it on the duſt * ». To this, elegant as it is, we may oppoſe the following ſimile of Oſſian's, relating to the death of the three ſons of Uſnoth. « They fell, like three » young oaks which ſtood alone on the hill. The » traveller ſaw the lovely trees, and wondered » how they grew ſo lonely. The blaſt of the de- » ſert came by night, and laid their green heads » low. Next day he returned; but they were » withered, and the heath was bare ». Malvi' na's alluſion to the ſame object, in her lamentation over Oſcar, is ſo exquiſitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place alſo. « I was a » lovely tree in thy preſence, Oſcar! with all » my branches round me. But thy death came, » like a blaſt from the deſert, and laid my green » head low. The ſpring returned with its ſho- » wers; but no leaf of mine aroſe ». Several of Oſſian's ſimiles taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diverſified with well choſen circumſtances; ſuch as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: « They have fallen like the oak » of the deſart; when it lies acroſs a ſtream, and » withers in the wind of the mountains » : Or

* Iliad xvii. 53.

that

that which Offian applies to himſelf; « I, like » an ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in » my place; the blaſt hath lopped my branches » away; and I tremble at the wings of the north ».

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Offian makes the ſame uſe of compariſons taken from ſpirits and ghoſts. Swaran « roared » in battle, like the ſhrill ſpirit of a ſtorm that » ſits dim on the clouds of Gormal, and enjoys » the death of the mariner ». His people gathered around Erragon, « like ſtorms around the » ghoſt of night, when he calls them from the » top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on » the land of the ſtranger ».—« They fell before » my ſon, like groves in the deſert, when an » angry ghoſt ruſhes through night, and takes » their green heads in his hand ». In ſuch images, Offian appears in his ſtrength; for very ſeldom have ſupernatural beings been painted with ſo much ſublimity, and ſuch force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, muſt yeld to him in ſimiles formed upon theſe. Take, for inſtance, the following, which is the moſt remarkable of this kind in the Iliad. « Meriones followed Idomeneus to battle, like » Mars the deſtroyer of men, when he ruſhes » to war. Terror, his beloved ſon, ſtrong and » fierce, attends him; who fills with diſmay, » the moſt valiant hero. They come from Thrace,

» armed againſt the Ephyrians and Phlegyans; » nor do they regard the prayers of either; but » diſpoſe of ſucceſs at their will *». The idea here, is undoubtedly noble: but obſerve what a figure Oſſian ſets before the aſtonished imagination, and with what ſublimely terrible circumſtances he has heightened it. « He rushed in the » ſound of his arms, like the dreadful ſpirit of » Loda, when he comes in the roar of a thouſand » ſtorms, and ſcatters battles from his eyes. He » ſits on a cloud over Lochlin's ſeas. His mighty » hand is on his ſword. The winds lift his flaming » locks. So terrible was Cuchullin in the day of » his fame ».

Homer's compariſons relate chiefly to martial ſubjects, to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagement and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Oſſian, we find a greater variety of other ſubjects illuſtrated by ſimiles; particularly, the ſongs of Bards, the beauty of women, the different circumſtances of old age, ſorrow, and private diſtreſs; which give occaſion to much beautiful imagery. What, for inſtance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following ſimile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had ſuffered? « Chief of Strumon, replied the ſighing maid, » why didſt thou come over the dark blue wave

* Iliad xiii. 298.

» to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I » paſs away in ſecret, like the flower of the rock, » that lifts its fair head unſeen, and ſtrews its » withered leaves on the blaſt ». The muſic of Bards, a favourite object with Oſſian, is illuſtrated by a variety of the moſt beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm ſhower of ſpring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and ſtill lake. Two ſimiles on this ſubject, I ſhall quote, becauſe they would do honour to any of the moſt celebrated claſſics. The one is; « Sit thou on the heath, O Bard! and » let us hear thy voice; it is pleaſant as the gale » of the ſpring that ſighs on the hunter's ear, » when he wakens from dreams of joy, and has » heard the muſic of the ſpirits of the hill ». The other contains a ſhort, but exquiſitely tender image, accompained with the fineſt poetical painting. « The muſic of Carryl was like the me- » mory of joys that are paſt, pleaſant and mourn- » ful to the ſoul. The ghoſts of departed Bards » heard it from Slimora's ſide. Soft ſounds ſpread » along the wood; and the ſilent valleys of night » rejoice ». What a figure would ſuch imagery and ſuch ſcenery have made, had they been preſented to us, adorned with the ſweetneſs and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have, choſen all along to compare Oſſian

with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reaſon. There is much nearer correſpondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of ſociety; both are originals; both are diſtinguiſhed by ſimplicity, ſublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the Roman ſtatelineſs which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldneſs, and enthuſiaſtick warmth of the Celtic Bard. In one article, indeed, there is a reſemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Oſſian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, thoſe of the other more ſtrong; the tenderneſs of Virgil ſoftens, that of Oſſian diſſolves and overcomes the heart.

A reſemblance may be ſometimes obſerved between Oſſian's compariſons, and thoſe employed by the ſacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they uſe it with the utmoſt propriety *. The imagery of Scripture exhibits a ſoil and climate altogether different from thoſe of Oſſian; a warmer country, a more ſmiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine preſs, and the threshing floor, are often preſented to us, the Cedar and the Palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the

* See Dr. Lowth de Sacra Poeſi Hebræorum.

voice of the Turtle, and the beds of Lillies. The ſimiles are, like Oſſian's, generally ſhort, touching on one point of reſemblance, rather than ſpread out into little epiſodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpreſſible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. « The nations ſhall rush like the ruſ-» hings of many waters; but God ſhall rebuke » them, and they ſhall fly far off, and ſhall be chaſed » as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, » and like the down of the thiſtle before the » whirlwind *».

Beſides formal compariſons, the poetry of Oſſian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors: Such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala; « She was covered with the light » of beauty; but her heart was the houſe of » pride ». This mode of expreſſion, which ſuppreſſes the mark of compariſon, and ſubſtitutes a figured deſcription in room of the object deſcribed, is a great enlivener of ſtyle. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which without pauſing to form a regular ſimile, paints the object at one ſtroke. « Thou art to me the beam of » the eaſt, riſing in a land unknown ». — « In » peace, thou art the gale of ſpring; in war, » the mountain ſtorm ». — « Pleaſant be thy » reſt, O lovely beam, ſoon haſt thou ſet on

* Iſaiah xvii. 13.

» our hills! The ſteps of thy departure were » ſtately, like the moon on the blue trembling » wave. But thou haſt left us in darkneſs, firſt » of the maids of Lutha! — Soon haſt thou ſet » Malvina! but thou riſeſt, like the beam of » the eaſt, among the ſpirits of thy friends, » where they ſit in their ſtormy halls, the cham- » bers of the thunder ». This is correct and finely ſupported. But in the following inſtance, the metaphor, though very beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it cloſes, by being improperly mixed with the literal ſenſe. « Trathal went forth with the ſtream of his people; » but they met a rock; Fingal ſtood unmoved; » broken they rolled back from his ſide. Nor did » they roll in ſafety; the ſpear of the king pur- » ſued their flight ».

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to find often employed by Oſſian; as the undiſciplined imagination of early ages generally prompts exageration, and carries its objects to exceſs; whereas longer experience, and farther progreſs in the arts of life, chaſten mens ideas and expreſſions. Yet Oſſian's hyperboles appear not to me, either ſo frequent, or ſo harſh, as might at firſt have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to the more cultivated ſtate, in which, as was before ſhewn, poetry ſubſiſted among the ancient Celtæ, than among moſt other

barbarous nations. One of the moſt exaggerated deſcriptions in the whole work, is what meets us at the beginning of Fingal, where the ſcout makes his report to Cuchullin of the landing of the foe. But this is ſo far from deſerving cenſure, that it merits praiſe, as being, on that occaſion, natural and proper. The ſcout arrives trembling and full of fears; and it is well known, that no paſſion diſpoſes men to hyperbolize more than terror. It both annihilates themſelves in their own apprehenſion, and magnifies every object which they view through the medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all thoſe indiſtinct images of formidable greatneſs, the natural marks of a diſturbed and confuſed mind, which occur in Moran's deſcription of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of the conference which they held together; not unlike the report, which the affrighted Jewiſh ſpies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. « The land through which » we have gone to ſearch it, is a land that eateth » up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people » that we ſaw in it, are men of a great ſta» ture: and there ſaw we giants, the ſons of » Anak, which come of the giants; and we were » in our own ſight as graſshoppers, and ſo were » we in their ſight* ».

With regard to perſonifications, I formerly ob-

* Numbers xiii. 32, 33.

ſerved that Oſſian was ſparing, and I accounted for his being ſo. Allegorical perſonages he has none; and their abſence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of thoſe shadowy beings, which have not the ſupport even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, ſeldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too viſible and phantaſtick; and overthrows that impreſſion of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the ſerious and pathetick ſcenes of Oſſian eſpecially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in Tragedy; ſerving only unſeaſonably to amuſe the fancy whilſt they ſtopped the current, and weakened the force of paſſion.

With apoſtrophes, or addreſſes to perſons abſent or dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of paſſion, our poet abounds; and they are among his higheſt beauties. Witneſs the apoſtrophe, in the firſt book of Fingal, to the maid of Iniſtore, whoſe lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuchullin to Bragela at the concluſion of the ſame book. He commands the harp to be ſtruck in her praiſe; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately ſuggeſting to him a crowd of tender ideas; « Doſt » thou raiſe thy fair face from the rocks », he exclaims, « to find the ſails of Cuchullin?

„ The ſea is rolling far diſtant, and its white „ foam ſhall deceive thee for my ſails „. And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this ſituation, he becomes afraid of the harm ſhe may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthuſiaſm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious ſtrain of modern poetry, „ Retire, „ he proceeds, „ retire, for it is night, „ my love, and the dark winds ſigh in thy hair. „ Retire to the hall of my feaſts, and think of „ the times that are paſt; for I will not return „ till the ſtorm of war has ceaſed. O Connal, „ ſpeak of wars and arms, and ſend her from „ my mind; for lovely with her raven hair is „ the white-boſomed daughter of Sorglan „. This breathes all the native ſpirit of paſſion and tenderneſs.

The adreſſes to the ſun, to the moon, and to the evening ſtar, muſt draw the attention of every reader of taſte, as among the moſt ſplendid ornaments of his collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious to need any particular comment. In one paſſage only of the addreſs to the moon, there appears ſome obſcurity. „ Whither doſt thou retire from thy „ courſe, when the darkneſs of thy countenance „ grows? Haſt thou thy hall, like Oſſian? Dwel„ leſt thou in the shadow of grief? Have thy

» ſiſters fallen from heaven? Are they who re-
» joiced with thee at night, no more? Yes,
» they have fallen, fair light! and thou doſt often
» retire to mourn ». We may be at a loſs to comprehend, at firſt view, the ground of theſe ſpeculations of Oſſian, concerning the moon; but when all the circumſtances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the preſent ſituation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any ſtrong paſſion, tinctures with its own diſpoſition, every object which it beholds. The old Bard, with his heart bleeding for the loſs of all his friends, is meditating on the different phaſes of the moon. Her waning and darkneſs, preſents to his melancholy imagination, the image of ſorrow; and preſently the idea ariſes, and is indulged, that, like himſelf, ſhe retires to mourn over the loſs of other moons, or of ſtars, whom he calls her ſiſters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkneſs ſuggeſted the idea of mourning, and mourning ſuggeſted nothing ſo naturally to Oſſian, as the death of beloved friends. An inſtance preciſely ſimilar of this influence of paſſion, may be ſeen in a paſſage which has always been admired of Shakeſpear's King Lear. The old man on the point of diſtraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, ſees Edgar appear diſguiſed like a beggar and a madman.

Lear. Didſt thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
Couldeſt thou leave nothing? Didſt thou give them all?
Kent. He hath no daughters, Sir.
Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have ſubdued nature,
To ſuch a lowneſs, but his unkind daughters.
King Lear, Act. 3. Scene 5.

The apoſtrophe to the winds, in the opening of Darthula, is in the higheſt ſpirit of poetry. « But the winds deceive thee, O Darthula: and » deny the woody Etha to thy ſails. Theſe are not » thy mountains, Nathos, nor is that the roar of » thy climbing waves. The halls of Cairbar are » near, and the towers of the foe lift their head. » – Where have ye been, ye ſouthern winds; » when the ſons of my love were deceived? » But ye have been ſporting on plains, and pur- » ſuing the thiſtle's beard. O that ye had been » ruſtling in the ſails of Nathos, till the hills of » Etha roſe! till they roſe in their clouds, and » ſaw their coming ». This paſſage is remarkable for the reſſemblance it bears to an expoſtulation with the wood nymphs, on their abſence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, Virgil has copied from Theocritus, and Milton has very happily imitated from both.

Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorſeleſs deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the ſteep

Where your old Bards, the famous Druids, lie;
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva ſpreads her wizard ſtream *.

Having now treated fully of Oſſian's talents, with reſpect to deſcription and imagery, it only remains to make ſome obſervations on his ſentiments. No ſentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, ſuited to the character and ſituation of thoſe who utter them. In this reſpect, Oſſian is as correct as moſt writers. His characters, as above obſerved, are in general well ſupported, which could not have been the caſe, had the ſentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of perſonages of different ages, ſexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they ſpeak and act with a propriety of ſentiment and behaviour, which it is ſurpriſing to find in ſo rude an age. Let the poem of Darthula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that ſentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they muſt alſo be ſublime and pathetick.

The ſublime is not confined to ſentiment alone. It belongs to deſcription alſo; and whether in deſcription or in ſentiment, imports ſuch ideas

* Milton's Lycidas. — See Theocrit. Idyll. I.
Πᾶ ποκ' ἀρ ἦσθ' ὁκα Δαφνις ἐτακετο; πᾶ ποκα, Νυμφαι, &c.
And. Virg. Eclog. 10.
Quæ nemora, aut qui vos ſaltus habuere, puellæ, &c.

preſented to the mind, as raiſe it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and aſtonishment. This is the higheſt effect either of eloquence or poetry: And to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the ſtrongeſt and warmeſt conception of ſome object awful, great or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Oſſian, may, I think, ſufficiently appear from many of the paſſages I have already had occaſion to quote. To produce more inſtances, were ſuperfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the ſpirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal; if the addreſs to the ſun, in Carthon; if the ſimiles founded upon ghoſts and ſpirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as examples, and illuſtrious ones too, of the true poetical ſublime, I confeſs myſelf entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumſtances, indeed, of Oſſian's compoſition, are favourable to the ſublime, more perhaps than to any other ſpecies of beauty. Accuracy and correctneſs; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful, will appear to more advantage in the midſt of ſmiling ſcenery and pleaſurable themes. But amidſt the rude ſcenes of nature, amidſt rocks, and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles,

dwells the ſublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offſpring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the leſſer graces, and perfectly conſiſtent with a certain noble diſorder. It aſſociates naturally with that grave and ſolemn ſpirit, which diſtinguiſhes our author. For the ſublime, is an awful and ſerious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of Trouble, and Terror, and Darkneſs.

Ipſe pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruſcâ
Fulmina molitur dextrâ; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; & mortalia corda
Per gentes, humilis ſtravit pavor; ille, flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit.—— VIRG. Georg. I.

Simplicity and conciſeneſs, are never-failing characteriſticks of the ſtile of a ſublime writer. He reſts on the majeſty of his ſentiments, not on the pomp of his expreſſions. The main ſecret of being ſublime, is to ſay great things in few, and in plain words: For every ſuperfluous decoration degrades a ſublime idea. The mind riſes and ſwells, when a lofty deſcription or ſentiment is preſented to it, in its native form. But no ſooner does the poet attempt to ſpread out this ſentiment or deſcription, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the tranſport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the ſublime is gone. Hence the conciſe and

ſimple ſtyle of Oſſian, gives great advantage to his ſublime conceptions; and aſſiſts them in ſeizing the imagination with full power *.

Sublimity as belonging to ſentiment, coincides in a great meaſure with magnanimity, heroiſm, and generoſity of ſentiment. Whatever diſcovers human nature in its greateſt elevation; whatever beſpeaks a high effort of ſoul; or ſhews a mind ſuperior to pleaſures, to dangers, and to death, forms what may be called the moral or ſentimental ſublime. For this, Oſſian is eminently diſtinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble ſentiment, throughout all his works. Particularly in all the

* The noted ſaying of Julius Cæſar, to the pilot in a ſtorm; "Quid times? Cæſarem vehis"; is magnanimous and ſublime. Lucan, not ſatisfied with this ſimple conciſeneſs, reſolved to amplify and improve the thought. Obſerve, how every time he twiſts it round, it departs farther from the ſublime, till, at laſt, it ends in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, pelagi; ventoque furenti
Trade ſinum. Italiam, ſi cœlo auctore, recuſas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi cauſa hæc eſt juſta timoris
Vectorem non noſſe tuum; quem numina nunquam
Deſtituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
Cum poſt vota venit; medias perrumpe procellas,
Tutelâ ſecure meâ. Cœli iſte fretique,
Non puppis noſtræ, labor eſt. Hanc Cæſare preſſam
A fluctu defendit onus.
—Quid tantâ ſtrage paratur,
Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cælique tumultu
Quid præſtet fortuna mihi.—

PHARSAL. V. 578.

ſentiments of Fingal, there is a grandeur and loftineſs proper to ſwell the mind with the higheſt ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he purſues, are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generoſity more than by force. A portion of the ſame ſpirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debaſing paſſions among Fingal's warriors; no ſpirit of avarice or of inſult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a deſire of being diſtinguiſhed and remembered for gallant actions; a love of juſtice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the ſtrain of ſentiment in the works of Oſſian.

But the ſublimity of moral ſentiments, if they wanted the ſoftening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and ſtiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in compariſon of that deep intereſt, which the heart takes in tender and pathetick ſcenes; where, by a myſterious attachment to the objects of compaſſion, we are pleaſed and delighted, even whilſt we mourn. With ſcenes of this kind, Oſſian abounds; and his high merit in theſe, is inconteſtable. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our

eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the leaſt ſenſibility, will queſtion. The general character of his poetry, is the heroic mixed with the elegiac ſtrain; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expreſſes it, « the » joy of grief », it is viſible, that on all moving ſubjects, he delights to exert his genius; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetick ſituations, than what his works preſent. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the ſimple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation; no ſubtile refinements on ſorrow; no ſubſtitution of deſcription in place of paſſion. Oſſian felt ſtrongly himſelf, and the heart; when, uttering its native language, never fails, by powerful ſympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for inſtance, can be more moving, than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune? Gaul, the ſon of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had ſuffered, comes to her reſcue. Their meeting is tender in the higheſt degree. He propoſes to engage her foe, in ſingle combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himſelf ſhall fall. « And ſhall the daughter of Nuath live, she » replied with a burſting ſigh? Shall I live in » Tromathon and the ſon of Morni low? My

» heart is not of that rock; nor my ſoul care-
» leſs as that ſea, which lifts its blue waves to
» every wind, and rolls beneath the ſtorm. The
» blaſt, which ſhall lay thee low, ſhall ſpread
» the branches of Oithona on earth. We ſhall
» wither together, ſon of car-borne Morni! The
» narrow houſe is pleaſant to me; and the grey
» ſtone of the dead; for never more will I leave
» thy rocks, ſea-ſurrounded Tromathon!- Chief
» of Strumon, why cameſt thou over the waves
» to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I
» paſs away in ſecret, like the flower of the
» rock, thas lifts its fair head unſeen, and ſtrews
» its withered leaves on the blaſt? Why didſt
» thou come, O Gaul! to hear my departing
» ſigh?-O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright
» beams of my fame! Then had my years come
» on with joy; and the virgins would bleſs my
» ſteps. But I fall in youth, ſon of Morni, and
» my father ſhall blush in his hall ».

Oithona mourns like a woman; in Cuchullin's expreſſions of grief after his defeat, we behold the ſentiments of a hero, generous but deſponding. The ſituation is remarkably fine. Cuchullin, rouzed from his cave, by the noiſe of battle, ſees Fingal victorious in the field. He is deſcribed as kindling at the ſight. « His hand is on the » ſword of his fathers; his red-rolling eyes on » the foe. He thrice attempted to rush to battle; » and thrice did Connal ſtop him » ; ſuggeſting,

that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the show of ſuperfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuchullin yields to this generous ſentiment; but we ſee it ſtinging him to the heart with the ſenſe of his own diſgrace. « Then, Carril, go, replied » the chief, and greet the king of Morven. » When Lochlin falls away like a ſtream after » rain, and the noiſe of the battle is over, then » be thy voice ſweet in his ear, to praiſe the » king of ſwords. Give him the ſword of Caith- » bat; for Cuchullin is worthy no more to liſt » the arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghoſts of » the lonely Cromla! Ye ſouls of chiefs that » are no more! Be ye the companions of Cuchullin, » and talk to him in the cave of his ſorrow. For » never more ſhall I be renowned among the » mighty in the land. I am like a beam that has » ſhone: Like a miſt that has fled away; when » the blaſt of the morning came, and brightened » the ſhaggy ſide of the hill. Connal! talk of » arms no more: Departed is my fame. My » ſighs ſhall be on Cromla's wind; till my foot- » ſteps ceaſe to be ſeen. And thou, white-boſo- » med Bragela! mourn over the fall of my fame; » for vanquiſhed, I will never return to thee, » thou ſun-beam of Dunſcaich »!

——————Æſtuat Ingens
Uno in corde pudor, luctuſque, & conſcia virtus.

Beſides ſuch extended patherick ſcenes, Oſſian frequently pierces the heart by a ſingle unexpected ſtroke. When Oſcar fell in battle, « No father » mourned his ſon ſlain in youth; no brother, » his brother of love; they fell without tears, » for the chief of the people was low ». In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the ſixth Iliad, the circumſtance of the child in his nurſe's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderneſs of the ſcene. In the following paſſage relating to the death of Cuchullin, we find a circumſtance that muſt ſtrike the imagination with ſtill greater force. « And is the ſon of Semo fallen? ſaid Carril with » a ſigh. Mournful are Tura's walls, and ſorrow » dwells at Dunſcaich. Thy ſpouſe is left alone » in her youth; the ſon of thy love is alone. » He ſhall come to Bragela, and ask her why » ſhe weeps. He ſhall lift his eyes to the wall, » and ſee his father's ſword. Whoſe ſword is » that? he will ſay; and the ſoul of his mother » is ſad ». Soon after Fingal had ſhewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his ſons, fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accuſtomed manner, his ſons to the chaſe. « Call », ſays he; « Fillan and Ryno » – But he his not here –. My ſon reſts on » the bed of death ». – This unexpected ſtart of anguish, is worthy of the higheſt tragic poet.

If she come in, she'll ſure ſpeak to my wife—
My wife! —my wife—What wife?—I have no wife—
Oh inſupportable! Oh heavy hour!

Othello, Act. 5. Scene 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is ſimilar; but the circumſtances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confuſion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himſelf, and ſuppreſſes his riſing grief.

The contraſt which Oſſian frequently makes between his preſent and his former ſtate, diffuſes over his whole poetry, a ſolemn pathetick air, which cannot fail to make impreſſion on every heart. The concluſion of the ſongs of Selma, is particularly calculated for this purpoſe. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind, a ſtronger, and more affecting idea of the venerable aged Bard. « Such were the words of the » Bards in the days of the ſong; when the king » heard the muſic of harps, and the tales of other » times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills, » and heard the lovely ſound. They praiſed the » voice of Cona *; the firſt among a thouſand Bards. » But age is now on my tongue, and my ſoul has » failed. I hear, ſometimes, the ghoſts of Bards, » and learn their pleaſant ſong. But memory fails » on my mind; I hear the call of years. They » ſay, as they paſs along: Why does Oſſian ſing?

* Oſſian himſelf is poetically called the voice of Cona.

» Soon shall he lie in the narrow houſe, and no » Bard ſhall raiſe his fame. Roll on, ye dark-brown » years! for ye bring no joy in your courſe. Let » the tomb open to Oſſian, for his ſtrength has » failed. The ſons of the ſong are gone to reſt. » My voice remains, like a blaſt, that roars lonely » on a ſea-ſurrounded rock, after the winds are » laid. The dark moſs whiſtles there, and the » diſtant mariner ſees the waving trees ».

Upon the whole; if to feel ſtrongly, and to deſcribe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Oſſian muſt, after fair examination, be held to poſſeſs that genius in a high degree. The queſtion is not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this, or that paſſage might not have been worked up with more art and skill, by ſome writer of happier times? A thouſand ſuch cold and frivolous criticiſms, are altogether indeciſive as to his genuine merit. But, has he the ſpirit, the fire, the inſpiration of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his ſentiments? Does he intereſt by his deſcriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? Theſe are the great characteriſticks of true poetry. Where theſe are found, he muſt be a minute critic indeed, who can dwell upon ſlight defects. A few beauties of this high kind, tranſcend whole volumes of faultleſs mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt, Oſſian may ſometimes appear

by reaſon of his conciſeneſs. But he is ſublime, he is pathetick, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extenſive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulneſs and accuracy of deſcription, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in ſtrength of imagination, in grandeur of ſentiment, in native majeſty of paſſion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear ſtream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being deſtitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as ſtrength. Seldom or never is he either trifling or tedious; and if he be thought too melancholy, yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other reſpects much leſs than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tendereſt ſympathies, and inſpire the moſt generous emotions. No reader can riſe from him, without being warmed with the ſentiments of humanity, virtue and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but muſt judge the tranſlation to deſerve the higheſt praiſe, on account of its beauty and elegance. Of its faithfulneſs and accuracy, I have been aſſured by perſons skilled in the Galic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of theſe poems of Oſſian. To transfuſe ſuch ſpirited and fervid ideas from one language into another; to tranſlate litterally, and yet with

ſuch a glow of poetry; to keep alive ſo much paſſion, an ſupport ſo much dignity throughout, is one of the moſt difficult works of genius, and proves the tranſlator to have been animated with no ſmall portion of Oſſian's ſpirit.

The meaſured proſe which he has employed, poſſeſſes conſiderable advantages above any ſort of verſification he could have choſen. Whilſt it pleaſes and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being, at the ſame time, freer from conſtraint in the choice and arrangement of words; it allows the ſpirit of the original to be exhibited with more juſtneſs, force, and ſimplicity. Elegant however, and maſterly as M. Macpherſon's tranſlation is, we muſt never forget, whilſt we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a ſevere teſt. For, we are examining a poet ſtripped of his native dreſs: diveſted of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of verſification in their original languages. If then, deſtitute of this advantage, exhibited in a litteral verſion, Oſſian ſtill has power to pleaſe as a poet; and not to pleaſe only, but often to command, to tranſport, to melt the heart; we may very ſafely infer, that his productions are the offſpring of true and uncommon genius; and we may boldly aſſign him a place among thoſe, whoſe works are to laſt for ages.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

THE ſubſtance of the preceding Diſſertation was originally delivered, ſoon after the firſt publication of Fingal, in the courſe of my lectures in the univerſity of Edinburgh; and, at the deſire of ſeveral of the hearers, was afterwards enlarged and given to the publick.

As the degree of antiquity belonging to the poems of Oſſian, appeared to be a point which might bear diſpute, I endeavoured, from internal evidence, to show that theſe poems muſt be referred to a very remote period; without pretending to aſcertain preciſely the date of their compoſition. I had not the leaſt ſuſpicion, when this Diſſertation was firſt published, that there was any occaſion for ſupporting their authenticity, as genuine productions of the Highlands of Scotland, as tranſlations from the Galic language; not forgeries of a ſuppoſed translator. In Scotland, their authenticity was never called in queſtion. I myſelf had particular reaſons to be fully ſatisfied concerning it. My knowledge of Mr. Macpherſon's perſonal honour and integrity, gave me full aſſurance of his being incapable of putting ſuch a groſs impoſition, firſt, upon his friends,

and then upon the publick; and if this had not been ſufficient, I knew, beſides, that the manner in which theſe poems were brought to light, was entirely inconſiſtent with any fraud. An accidental converſation with a gentleman diſtinguished in the literary world, gave occaſion to Mr. Macpherſon's tranſlating literally one or two ſmall pieces of the old Galic poetry. Theſe being ſhown to me and ſome others rendered us very deſirous of becoming more acquainted with that poetry. Mr. Macpherſon, afraid of not doing juſtice to compoſitions which he admired in the original, was very backward to undertake the task of tranſlating; and the publication of *The fragments of ancient poems*, was with no ſmall importunity extorted from him. The high reputation which theſe preſently acquired, made it he thought unjuſt that the world ſhould be deprived of the poſſeſſion of more, if more of the ſame kind could be recovered: And Mr. Macpherſon was warmly urged by ſeveral gentlemen of rank and taſte, to diſengage himſelf from other occupations, and to undertake a journey through the Highlands and Iſlands, on purpoſe to make a collection of thoſe curious remains of ancient genius. He complied with their deſire, and ſpent ſeveral months in viſiting thoſe remote parts of the country; during which time he correſponded frequently with his friends in Edinburgh, inform-

ed them of his progreſs, of the application which he made in different quarters, and of the ſucceſs which he met with; ſeveral letters of his, and of thoſe who aſſiſted him in making diſcoveries paſſed through my hands; his undertaking was the object of conſiderable attention; and returning at laſt, fraught with the poetical treaſures of the north, he ſet himſelf to tranſlate under the eye of ſome who were acquainted with the Galic language, and looked into his manuſcripts; and by a large publication made an appeal to all the natives of the Highland, and Iſlands of Scotland, whether he had been faithful to his charge, and done juſtice to their well known and favourite poems.

Such a tranſaction certainly did not afford any favourable opportunity for carrying on an impoſture. Yet in England, it ſeems, an opinion has prevailed with ſome, that an impoſture has been carried on; that the poems which have been given to the world are not tranſlations of the works of any old Galic Bard, but modern compoſitions, formed, as it is ſaid, upon a higher plan of poetry and ſentiment than could belong to an age and a country reputed barbarous: And I have been called upon and urged to produce ſome evidence for ſatisfying the world that they are not the compoſitions of Mr. Macpherſon himſelf, under the borrowed name of Oſſian.

If the queſtion had been concerning manuſcripts brought from ſome diſtant or unknown region, with which we had no intercourſe; or concerning tranſlations from an Aſiatic or American language, which ſcarce any body underſtood, ſuſpicions might naturally have ariſen, and an author's aſſertions have been anxiouſly and ſcrupulouſly weighed. But in the caſe of a literal tranſlation, profeſſed to be given of old traditionary poems of our own country; of poems aſſerted to be known in the original to many thouſand inhabitants of Great Britain, and illuſtrated too by many of their current tales and ſtories concerning them, ſuch extreme ſcepticiſm is altogether out of place. For who would have been either ſo hardy or ſo ſtupid, as to attempt a forgery which could not have failed of being immediately detected? Either the author muſt have had the influence to engage, as confederates in the fraud, all the natives of the Highlands and Iſlands, diſperſed as they are throughout every corner of the British dominions; or, we ſhould, long ere this time, have heard their united voice exclaiming, « Theſe are » not our poems, nor what we were ever accuſ- » tomed to hear from our Bards or our fathers ». Such remonſtrances would, at leaſt, have reached thoſe who dwell in a part of the country which is adjacent to the Highlands; and muſt have come loud to the ears of ſuch, eſpecially,

as were known to be the promoters of Mr. Macpherſon's undertaking. The ſilence of a whole country in this caſe, and of a country, whoſe inhabitants are well known to be attached, in a remarkable degree, to all their own antiquities, is of as much weight as a thouſand poſitive teſtimonies. And ſurely, no perſon of common underſtanding would have adventured, as Mr. Macpherſon has done in his diſſertation on Temora, to engage in a controverſy with the whole Iriſh nation concerning theſe poems, and to inſiſt upon the honour of them being due to Scotland, if they had been mere forgeries of his own; which the Scots, in place of ſupporting ſo ridiculous a claim, muſt have inſtanly rejected.

But as reaſoning alone is apt not to make much impreſſion, where ſuſpicions have been entertained concerning a matter of fact, it was thought proper to have recourſe to expreſs teſtimonies. I have accordingly applied to ſeveral perſons of credit and honour, both gentlemen of fortune, and clergymen of the eſtabliſhed church, who are natives of the Highlands or Iſlands of Scotland, and well acquainted with the language of the country, deſiring to know their real opinion of the tranſlations published by Mr. Macpherſon. Their original letters to me, in return, are in my poſſeſſion. I ſhall give a fair and faithful account of the reſult of their teſtimony: And I

have full authority to uſe the names of thoſe gentlemen for what I now advance.

I muſt begin with affirming, that though among thoſe with whom I have correſponded, ſome have had it in their power to be more particular and explicit in their teſtimony than others; there is not, however, one perſon, who inſinuates the moſt remote ſuſpicion that Mr. Macpherſon has either forged, or adulterated any one of the Poems he has published. If they make any complaints of him, it is on account of his having omitted other poems, which they think of equal merit with any which he has published. They all, without exception, concur in holding his tranſlations to be genuine, and proceed upon their authenticity as a fact acknowledged throughout all thoſe Northern provinces; aſſuring me that any one would be expoſed to ridicule among them, who should call it in queſtion. I muſt obſerve, that I had no motive to direct my choice of the perſons to whom I applied for information, preferably to others, except their being pointed out to me, as the perſons in their different counties who were moſt likely to give light on this head.

With regard to the manner in which the originals of theſe poems have been preſerved and tranſmitted, which has been repreſented as ſo myſterious and inexplicable, I have received the following plain account: That until the preſent century, al-

moſt every great family in the Highlands had their own Bard, to whoſe office it belonged to be maſter of all the poems and ſongs of the country; that among theſe poems the works of Oſſian are eaſily diſtinguished from thoſe of later Bards, by ſeveral peculiarities in his ſtyle and manner; that Oſſian has been always reputed the Homer of the Highlands, and all his compoſitions held in ſingular eſteem and veneration; that the whole country is full of traditionary ſtories derived from his poems, concerning Fingal and his race of heroes, of whom there is not a child but has heard, and not a diſtrict in which there are not places pointed out famous for being the ſcene of ſome of their feats of arms; that it was wont to be the great entertainment of the Highlanders, to paſs the winter evenings in diſcourſing of the times of Fingal, and rehearſing theſe old poems, of which they have been all along enthuſiaſtically fond; that when aſſembled at their feſtivals, or on any of their publick occaſions, wagers were often laid who could repeat moſt of them, and to have ſtore of them in their memories, was both an honourable and a profitable acquiſition, as it procured them acceſs into the families of their great men; that with regard to their antiquity, they are beyond all memory or tradition; inſomuch that there is a word commonly uſed in the Highlands to this day, when they would expreſs any thing which is of the moſt re-

mote or unknown antiquity, importing, that it belongs to the age of Fingal.

I am farther informed, that after the uſe of letters was introduced into that part of the country, the Bards and others began early to commit ſeveral of theſe poems to writing; that old manuſcripts of them, many of which are now deſtroyed or loſt, are known and atteſted to have been in the poſſeſſion of ſome great families; that the moſt valuable of thoſe which remained, were collected by Mr. Macpherſon during his journey through that country; that though the poems of Oſſian, ſo far as they were handed down by oral tradition, were no doubt liable to be interpolated and to have their parts disjoined and put out of their natural order, yet by comparing together the different oral editions of them (if we may uſe that phraſe) in different corners of the country, and by comparing theſe alſo with the manuſcripts which he obtained, Mr. Macpherſon had it in his power to aſcertain, in a great meaſure, the genuine original; to reſtore the parts to their proper order, and to give the whole to the publick in that degree of correctneſs, in which it now appears.

I am alſo acquainted, that if enquiries had been made fifty or threeſcore years ago, many more particulars concerning theſe poems might have been learned, and many more living witneſſes have been produced for atteſting their authenticity; but that

the manners of the inhabitants of the Highland counties have of late undergone a great change. Agriculture, trades, and manufactures, begin to take place of hunting, and the shepherd's life. The introduction of the buſy and laborious arts has conſiderably abated that poetical enthuſiaſm which is better ſuited to a vacant and indolent ſtate. The fondneſs of reciting their old poems decays; the cuſtom of teaching them to their children is fallen into deſuetude; and few are now to be found, except old men, who can rehearſe from memory any conſiderable parts of them.

For theſe particulars, concerning the ſtate of the Highlands and the tranſmiſſion of Oſſian's poems, I am indebted to the reverend and very learned and ingenious Mr. John Macpherſon, miniſter of Slate in the Iſland of Sky, and to the reverend Mr. Donald Macqueen miniſter of Kilmuir in Sky, Mr. Donald Macleod miniſter of Glenelg in Inverneſsshire, Mr. Lewis Grant miniſter of Duthel in Inverneſsshire, Mr. Angus Macneil miniſter of the Iſland of ſouth Uiſt, Mr. Neil Macleod miniſter of Roſs, in the Iſland of Mull, and Mr. Alexander Macaulay chaplain to the 88th Regiment.

The honourable colonel Hugh Mackay of bighouſe in the Shire of Sutherland, Donald Campbell of Airds in Argyleshire Eſq; Æneas Mackintosh of Mackintosh in Inverneſsshire, Eſq; and Ronald Macdonell of Keappoch in Lochaber, Eſq;

captain in the 87th regiment commanded by colonel Fraſer, all concur in teſtifying that Mr. Macpherſon's collection conſiſts of genuine Highland poems; known to them to be ſuch, both from the general report of the country where they live, and from their own remembrance of the originals. Colonel Mackay aſſerts very poſitively, upon perſonal knowledge, that many of the poems published by Mr. Macpherſon are true and faithful tranſlations. Mr. Campbell declares that he has heard many of them, and captain Macdonell that he has heard parts of every one of them, recited in the original language.

James Grant of Rothiemurchus, Eſq; and Alexander Grant, of Delrachny, Eſq; both in the Shire of Inverneſs, deſire to be named as vouchers for the poem of Fingal in particular. They remember to have heard it often in their younger days, and are poſitive that Mr. Macpherſon has given a juſt tranſlation of it.

Lauchlan Macpherſon of Strathmashie in Inverneſsshire, Eſq; gives a very full and explicit teſtimony, from particular knowledge, in the following words: That in the year 1760, he accompanied Mr. Macpherſon during ſome part of his journey through the Highlands in ſearch of the poems of Oſſian; that he aſſiſted him in collecting them; that he took down from oral tradition, and tranſcribed from old manuſcripts by far the great-

eſt part of thoſe pieces Mr. Macpherſon has published; that ſince the publication he has carefully compared the tranſlation with the copies of the originals in his hands; and that he finds it amazingly literal, even to ſuch a degree as often to preſerve the cadence of the Galic verſification. He affirms, that among the manuſcripts which were at that time in Mr. Macpherſon's poſſeſſion, he ſaw one of as old a date as the year 1410.

Sir James Macdonald of Macdonald, in the Iſland of Sky, Baronet, aſſured me, that after having made, at my deſire, all the enquiries he could in his part of the country, he entertained no doubt that Mr. Macpherſon's collection conſiſted entirely of authentick Highland poems; that he had lately heard ſeveral parts of them repeated in the original, in the Iſland of Sky, with ſome variations from the printed tranſlation, ſuch as might naturally be expected from the circumſtances of oral tradition; and ſome parts, in particular the epiſode of Fainaſollis in the third book of Fingal, which agree litterally with the tranſlation; and added, that he had heard recitations of others poems not tranſlated by Mr. Macpherſon, but generally reputed to be of Oſſian's compoſition, which were of the ſame ſpirit and ſtrain with ſuch as are tranſlated, and which he eſteemed not inferiour to any of them in ſublimity of deſcription, dignity of ſentiment, or any other of the beauties of poetry. This laſt

particular muſt have great weight; as it is well known how much the judgment of Sir James Macdonald deſerves to be relied upon, in every thing that relates to litterature and taſte.

The late reverend Mr. Alexander Macfarlane, miniſter of Arrachar in Dumbartonshire, who was remarkably eminent for his profound knowledge in Galic learning and antiquities, wrote to me ſoon after the publication of Mr. Macpherſon's work, terming it, a maſterly tranſlation; informing me that he had often heard ſeveral of theſe poems in the original, and remarked many paſſages ſo particularly ſtriking beyond any thing he had ever read in any human compoſition, that he never expected to ſee a ſtrength of genius able to do them that juſtice in a tranſlation, which Mr. Macpherſon has done.

Norman Macleod of Macleod, in the Iſland of Sky, Eſq; Walter Macfarlane of Macfarlane in Dumbartonshire, Eſq; Mr. Alexander Macmillan, deputy keeper of his Majeſty's ſignet, Mr. Adam Ferguſſon, profeſſor of moral philoſophy in the Univerſity of Edimburgh, and many other gentlemen natives of the Highland counties, whom I had occaſion to converſe with upon this ſubject, declare, that though they cannot now repeat from memory any of theſe poems in the original, yet from what they have heard in their youth, and from the impreſſion of the ſubject ſtill remaining

on their minds, they firmly believe thoſe which Mr. Macpherſon has published, to be the old poems of Oſſian current in the country.

Deſirous, however, to have this tranſlation particularly compared with the oral editions of any who had parts of the original diſtinctly on their memory, I applied to ſeveral clergymen to make enquiry in their reſpective parishes concerning ſuch perſons; and to compare what they rehearſed with the printed verſion. Accordingly, from the reverend Mr. John Macpherſon miniſter of Slate in Sky, Mr. Neil Macleod miniſter of Roſs in Mull, Mr. Angus Macneil miniſter of South Uiſt, Mr. Donald Macqueen miniſter of Kilmuir in Sky, and Mr. Donald Macleod miniſter of Glenelg, I have had reports on this head, containing diſtinct and explicit teſtimonies to almoſt the whole epic poem of Fingal, from beginning to end, and to ſeveral alſo of the leſſer poems, as rehearſed in the original, in their preſence, by perſons whoſe names and places of abode they mention, and compared by themſelves with the printed tranſlation. They affirm that in many places, what was rehearſed in their preſence agreed literally and exactly with the tranſlation. In ſome places they found variations from it, and variations even among different rehearſers of the ſame poem in the original; as words and ſtanzas omitted by ſome which others repeated, and the order

and connection in ſome places changed. But they remark, that theſe variations are on the whole not very material; and that Mr. Macpherſon ſeemed to them to follow the moſt juſt and authentic copy of the ſenſe of his author. Some of theſe clergymen, particularly Mr. Neil Macleod, can themſelves repeat from memory ſeveral paſſages of Fingal, the tranſlation of which they aſſure me is exact. Mr. Donald Macleod acquaints me, that it was in his houſe Mr. Macpherſon had the deſcription of Cuchullin's horſes and chariot, in the firſt book of Fingal, given him by Allan Macaskill ſchoolmaſter. Mr. Angus Macneil writes, that Mr. Macdonald, a parishioner of his, declares, that he has often ſeen and read a great part of an ancient manuſcript, once in the poſſeſſion of the family of Clanronald, and afterwards carried to Ireland, containing many of theſe poems; and that rehearſed before him ſeveral paſſages out of Fingal, which agreed exactly with Mr. Macpherſon's tranſlation; that Neil Macmurrich, whoſe predeceſſors had for many generations been Bards to the family of Clanronald, declared alſo in his preſence, that he had often ſeen and read the ſame old manuſcript; that he himſelf, gave to Mr. Macpherſon a manuſcript containing ſome of the poems which are now tranſlated and published, and rehearſed before Mr. Macneil, in the original, the whole of the

poem entitled Dar-thula, with very little variation from the printed tranſlation. I have received the ſame teſtimony concerning this poem, Dar-thula, from Mr. Macpherſon miniſter of Slate; and in a letter communicated to me from Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, of the 88th regiment, informing me of its being recited in the original, in their preſence, from beginning to end: On which I lay the more ſtreſs, as any perſon of taſte who turns to that poem will ſee, that it is one of the moſt highly finiſhed in the whole collection, and moſt diſtinguiſhed for poetical and ſentimental beauties; inſomuch, that whatever genius could produce Dar-thula, muſt be judged fully equal to any performance contained in Mr. Macpherſon's publication. I muſt add here, that though they who have compared the tranſlation with what they have heard rehearſed of the original, beſtow high praiſes both upon Mr. Macpherſon's genius and his fidelity; yet I find it to be their general opinion, that in many places he has not been able to attain to the ſtrength and ſublimity of the original which he copied.

I have authority to ſay, in the name of Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Macnab of the 88th regiment, or regiment of Highland Voluntiers commanded by colonel Campbell, that he has undoubted evidence of Mr. Macpherſon's collection being genuine, both from what he well re-

members to have heard in his youth, and from his having heard very lately a conſiderable part of the poem of Temora rehearſed in the original, which agreed exactly with the printed verſion.

By the reverend Mr. Alexander Pope miniſter of Reay, in the ſhire of Caithneſs, I am informed, that twenty-four years ago, he had begun to make a collection of ſome of the old poems current in his part of the country; on comparing which, with Mr. Macpherſon's work, he found in his collection the poem intitled, the battle of Lora, ſome parts of Lathmon, and the account of the death of Oſcar. From the above mentioned Lieutenant Duncan Macnicol, teſtimonies have been alſo received to a great part of Fingal, to part of Temora, and Carric-thura, as well as to the whole of Dar-thula, as recited in his preſence in the original, compared, and found to agree with the tranſlation.

I myſelf read over the greateſt part of the Engliſh verſion of the ſix books of Fingal, to Mr. Kenneth Macpherſon of Stornoway in the Iſland of Lewis, merchant, in preſence of the reverend Mr. Alexander Macaulay chapelain to the 88th regiment. In going along Mr. Macpherſon vouched what was read to be well known to him in the original, both the deſcriptions and the ſentiments. In ſome places, though he remembered

bered the ſtory, he did not remember the words of the original; in other places, he remembered and repeated the Galic lines themſelves, which, being interpreted to me by Mr. Macaulay, were found, upon compariſon, to agree often literally with the printed verſion, and ſometimes with ſlight variations of a word or an epithet. This teſtimony carried to me, and muſt have carried to any other who had been preſent, the higheſt conviction; being preciſely a teſtimony of that nature which an Engliſhman well acquainted with Milton, or any favourite author, would give to a foreigner, who ſhewed him a verſion of this author into his own language, and wanted to be ſatisfied from what the Engliſhman could recollect of the original, whether it was really a tranſlation of Paradiſe Loſt, or a ſpurious work under that title which had been put into his hands.

The above-mentioned Mr. Alexander Macaulay, Mr. Adam Fergusſon profeſſor of moral philoſophy, and Mr. Alexander Fraſer, governor to Francis Stuart, Eſq; inform me, that at ſeveral different times they were with Mr. Macpherſon, after he had returned from his journey through the Highlands, and whilſt he was employed in the work of tranſlating; that they looked into his manuſcripts, ſeveral of which had the appearance of being old; that they were fully ſatiſ-

fied of their being genuine Highland poems; that they compared the tranſlation in many places with the original; and they atteſt it to be very juſt and faithful, and remarkably literal.

It has been thought worth while to beſtow this attention on eſtabliſhing the authenticity of the works of Oſſian, now in poſſeſſion of the publick: Becauſe whatever rang they are allowed to hold as works of genius; whatever different opinions may be entertained concerning their poetical merit, they are unqueſtionably valuable in another view; as monuments of the taſte and manners of an ancient age, as uſeful materials for enlarging our knowledge of the human mind and character; and muſt, beyond all diſpute, be held as at leaſt, one of the greateſt curioſities, which have at any time enriched the republick of letters. More teſtimonies to them might have been produced by a more enlarged correſpondence with the Highland counties: But I apprehend, if any apology is neceſſary, it is for producing ſo many names, in a queſtion, where the conſenting ſilence of a whole country, was to every unprejudiced perſon, the ſtrongeſt proof, that ſpurious compoſitions, in the name of that country, had not been obtruded upon the world.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM